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(AD 1635-1711)

*Minister of the Gospel in Rotterdam*

# THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONABLE SERVICE

in which Divine Truths concerning the

## COVENANT OF GRACE

are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated

as well as

The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments

by

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Soteriology:

*The Doctrine of Salvation*

*(continued)*



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 CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE
 

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## Fasting

To fast [Hebrew:  $\tau\psi\nu(\tau)$ , (*ta'anith*)], is a derivative of the words to oppress, humiliate, torment, as well as to be distressed. Others translate this Hebrew word as “to fast”: “And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness” (Ezra 9:5); “Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul?” (Isa 58:5). Also the word  $\text{M}\omega\chi$  (*tsoom*) means “to fast” (Isa 58:5). In Greek we have the word  $\nu\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota/\alpha$  (*nesteia*), which means not to eat. It is the latter which we wish to express by the verb “to fast.”

*Fasting is a special religious exercise in which a believer deprives himself for a day from all that invigorates the body, humbling himself in body and soul before God as a means to obtain what he desires.*

*Fasting is a religious exercise—an exercise in which one seeks after God.* Fasting due to poverty, avarice, illness, for health reasons, or a being prevented from eating food due to business activities is not applicable here. Rather we speak here of fasting as a religious exercise; it is God-focused and its intent is to seek God thereby. Since all practice of religion is neither to be self-willed nor practiced according to human institutions, but only according to God’s command and precept, this is also applicable for fasting. It does not consist of idleness, but is an activity which is a day-long engagement consisting of secret dealings with God.

*It is a special exercise.* It is not a daily activity such as prayer, reading, thanksgiving, and singing. Rather, it is practiced at special seasons of need, such as being threatened or oppressed by the danger of a plague, having to engage in a very weighty task, perplexity, or having to make a choice concerning a weighty matter. It can even relate to everyday matters such as seeking

communion with God, the need for strength to oppose specific sins, and growth in grace.

#### Fasting: To be Deprived of All That Invigorates the Body

Fasting primarily consists in *a depriving one's self* of all that invigorates the body, being desirous to bring the body for that given day into a condition of withdrawal, distress, pliability, and weakness.

It consists, first of all, in depriving ourselves of all food (being expressed by the word fasting), for he who partakes of any food has broken the fast. Observe this in Esther 4:16: "... fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink." We do not fast by merely depriving ourselves of meat. In the Old Testament there was a distinction between foods and between clean and unclean; however, this is not related to fasting. Paul states, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine" (Rom 14:21). It is also not related to days of fasting; rather, this pertains to giving offense to a weaker brother. The latter occurred during that period when there were some who still made a distinction between foods as dictated by the law of the Old Testament. It is in reference to this that the apostle states: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor 8:13). That is, "I would rather deprive myself of this than that I should offend anyone." Some had freedom to eat animals which had been sacrificed to idols. The apostle declared that there was such freedom, since the idol was in reality nonexistent. Others, however, did not believe they had such freedom and were offended when they observed that others did so. Therefore, not only did the apostle refuse to eat the meat of sacrificed animals, but he wanted to eat no meat at all, if someone would be offended by it. Except for such occasions, however, he would eat meat. Thus, these texts cannot be used in support of papal fasting, at which time they deprive themselves of meat. Else, they should also deprive themselves of wine and ought not ever eat meat.

Secondly, on a day of fasting we are to deprive ourselves of all external ornamentation. In Old Testament times the people covered their bodies with a type of material which was of the most inferior kind. They would then draw this as tightly around the body as if they were putting goods into a bag in preparation for transport, for they normally wore wide garments (Isa 3:24). Furthermore, they made this sack, which they wrapped around themselves, dirty by sprinkling dirt and ashes upon it, so that they would display themselves before God and men in the most wretched and humblest circumstances, thereby declaring that they were unworthy

of everything. “A day for a man ... to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?” (Isa 58:5); “My clothing was sackcloth” (Ps 35:13); “Gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes” (Jer 6:26); “No man did put on him his ornaments” (Exod 33:4).

Thirdly, on a day of fasting we must deprive ourselves of all entertainment such as recreational games; taking a walk for the purpose of seeing gardens, ornamental works of art, or plantations; or going out by boat or horse and carriage merely for pleasure. “Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure” (Isa 58:3). One must even refrain from marital union (1 Cor 7:5).

Fourthly, we must also refrain from performing the labors of our calling. “And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest” Lev 23:30,32.

Fifthly, there must also be a refraining from sleep. On such a day we must arise early and retire no earlier than normal. On such a day we may also not slumber, for that would be entirely contrary to the objective of the day. Such slumber results in a loss of time, and it is as if we would bring a dead body before the Lord—as if it were the body that was fasting. It is in conflict with a humbling of ourselves. Sleep invigorates a person, and the purpose of this day is the humbling of the soul as facilitated by the faintness and weakness of the body—and thus to humble one’s self deeply.

Sixthly, above all things we must carefully guard against the commission of sins. It would be the abomination of all abominations if upon a day that we wish to humble ourselves over our sins and desire to pray for forgiveness—as well as to be spared from those plagues which we have made ourselves worthy of by way of sin—that at the same time we were to tempt the Lord by the commission of sin. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness” (Isa 58:6).

#### *Fasting: A Humbling of Ourselves*

The second aspect of fasting is a humbling of ourselves according to body and soul. Soul and body are so intimately united that the ill disposition of the one begets the ill disposition of the other. When the body, due to the withdrawal of all refreshment, is rendered feeble, pliable, and is subdued, the soul will also be in such a disposition; and thus the natural disposition takes on a spiritual dimension. Fasting, in and of itself, is not a religious practice. It is only so when it is a seeking after God by way of fasting. He who has merely deprived himself of all refreshment has not partially observed a day of fasting, for fasting and a humbling of

ourselves are not two separate duties. Fasting must be characterized by a humbling of ourselves, and the humbling of ourselves must be done by way of fasting. Fasting serves but one purpose: to facilitate the humbling of the soul; it has no significance beyond that. Since fasting facilitates this, however, the act as such is nevertheless required. It is an essential aspect of a day of fasting—however, only in union with, and thus inseparable from, the humbling of ourselves. They do not function in a dual sense, but in unison.

When, on a given day of fasting, we humble ourselves by way of fasting, then, at the very outset of the day, there will be a greater appetite for food than normal—already prior to the normal mealtime. This is not always due to the corruption of our nature—a nature which always hankers for that which is forbidden. Rather, it issues forth from the relationship between fasting and the humbling of ourselves. Sorrow over the deficiency of the soul engenders sorrow about that which the body is lacking, and a deficiency in the body engenders sorrow over the deficiency of the soul. They are thus both subservient to the humbling of ourselves (Deut 10:12). “... and ye shall afflict your souls” (Lev 23:27).

A humbling of one’s self consists in:

(1) The confession of sin, accompanied with grief and shame: “Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting ... and confessed their sins” (Neh 9:1-2); “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:6).

(2) Declaring ourselves to be worthy of judgment and a subscribing to justice if the Lord were to execute those merited judgments upon us. “Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly” (Neh 9:33).

(3) A supplicating for grace, frequently accompanied with weeping. Concerning the day of a solemn assembly we read in Joel 2:17: “Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord.” This is also to be observed on the day of fasting recorded in Neh 9. Consider also the following passages: “I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom” (Ps 35:13); “And when they had fasted and prayed ...” (Acts 13:3); “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt 17:21);

(4) A renewal of the covenant with the wholehearted intent to forsake former sins and to live a godly life: “And because of all this we make a sure covenant” (Neh 9:38); “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness” (Isa 58:6);

(5) The giving of alms: “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isa 58:6-7).

### *The Duration of Fasting*

The duration of fasting is limited to a twenty-four hour period—from evening to evening.

(1) Moses Deut 9:9, Elijah 1 Kings 19:8, and the Lord Jesus Christ Matt 4:2 fasted for forty consecutive days, during which time the Lord preserved their lives in a miraculous manner. We are not commanded to imitate this; to do so is only superstition. Furthermore, no one can be without food for such a long period of time. We do not follow the Lord Jesus if we deprive ourselves of meat for such a period of time while yet eating something during the day. He did not eat at all during that period, nor did He designate His fasting to be an example to be followed by us. Many things He either did by virtue of His divinity or in regard to His mediatorial office, we are neither able nor permitted to imitate.

(2) We also read about seven days of fasting 1 Chron 10:12 and of three days (Esther 4:16). This is to be understood as a period during which something was eaten each evening. Or else, due to there being a warmer climate in those countries, they were able to be without food for a longer time, without doing harm to their health. However, the normal time period for fasting is one day—from evening to evening Lev 23; (Isa 58:5).

*Question:* Are all men obligated to fast for an entire day? Would one then, upon becoming somewhat faint and thus unfit for prayer and other duties of that day, be able to eat something, such as a piece of bread or something similar?

*Answer:* In respect to certain persons the rule applies, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6). This applies to women who have given birth, the sick, nursing mothers, those who are exceptionally weak (even though not sick), nursing babies, as well as children who must be dealt with according to their age. Some are not to be deprived of anything, others are to be given as little as possible, and again others need to learn how to fast. However, the healthy must deprive themselves of everything for the entire time. To become somewhat faint is the objective of fasting, and one must not shrink back from that objective. The pretense of being unfit for prayer issues forth from the opinion that fasting is no more than an exercise to become more fit for prayer and similar exercises. Such

believe that this faintness is not a part of fasting, thinking that it is only spiritual in nature. One will also experience that, rather than becoming unfit, this faintness will render one more fit to pray with increased humility, as well as cause one to call upon God with the disposition of one who is entirely destitute. Even if the manifestation of all this is not as vehement as is otherwise the case, toward the evening, prayer will become more earnest, and then at times a special blessing will follow.

### *The Distinction Between Public and Private Fasting*

As far as the persons who fast are concerned, a distinction can be made between public and private fasting.

First, *public fasting* occurs when:

(1) It is proclaimed by the government due to a general national need—be it war, pestilence, famine, an insect plague, extraordinary drought, persistent rain, or similar occurrences. In such events, governments have the right to proclaim fast and prayer days. This does not mean that such a day of fasting is a commandment of men; no, the observance of days of fasting is commanded by God. Instead, governments do but designate the time as determined by God by way of extraordinary circumstances.

(2) A synod, classis, or elders of a particular congregation designate a day of fasting for the church under their supervision, doing so due to an extraordinary need in the church—be it persecution of that church or churches in other lands, the manifestation of false doctrine, the need for reform due to decline, the calling of ministers or the election of consistories, or other specific circumstances. This is also not a human institution, but the observance of a divine command.

Secondly, *private fasting* occurs when:

(1) some individual bosom friends agree to set apart a day—be it due to their own needs or the needs of others, or an exceptional desire to seek the Lord earnestly for a desired matter—either for body or soul;

(2) a father institutes a day of fasting for his family;

(3) an individual sets apart a day for himself. Everyone has personal freedom in doing this, be it that he sets apart a day for special occasions; that he schedules days of fasting which, in his judgment, are most suitable for him—this having been the custom of eminently godly persons—lest that by having to select a day anew each time the matter be neglected; or that he selects such a day each time anew. In so doing we will acquaint ourselves with the Lord; we will become more modest and holy, and the Lord

generally grants more spiritual grace to such. In setting such a day apart, every one is free as to the extent to which he wishes to do so. It can be that he will desist from his labors if he is self-employed and if it is not to the disadvantage of his family; he can do this without anyone else noticing this. Or it can be that he sets this day apart while nevertheless intending to do his work—this being required by his circumstances—and to eat a limited amount of food, so as to conceal from others the fact that he is fasting that day. The latter must very much be his objective according to the instruction of Christ in Matt 6:16-18: “Moreover when ye fast (this applies to private rather than public fasting), be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance. ... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head (dress yourself in an honorable manner, as you are accustomed to do), and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” If, however, you cannot conceal this from your family, then you must not allow this to detract you. But, if this would cause you to be ridiculed, you must fully conceal this and eat a little.

### *Exhortation to Fasting*

It is sad—a sign of great decay in the church—that so little work is made of fasting, both in public as well as secretly. Therefore all who wish to lead a life of tender godliness and desire to see the good of Zion ought to stir themselves up to exercise this duty, for:

(1) Has not God has commanded this? (Lev 23:27; Joel 2:12);

(2) Have not the church and the saints of all ages practiced this and left us an example to be followed? Observe this in (Judg 20:26); 2 Chron 20:3 and Neh 9:1. References to solitary fasting are to be found in Neh 1:4 and Ps 35:13. This was not only a duty and practice in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament (cf. Matt 6:16-18; Matt 9:15; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor 7:5). Therefore, as obedient children of God and followers of the saints, fast frequently. This was the practice of the original Christian church and of believers at the outset of the Reformation—and even long thereafter. Do not allow this practice to die out.

If a public fast has been proclaimed, conduct yourself well in doing so. There are but few who fast well. If, therefore, there is perplexity in the land where the church resides, God’s eye will be upon you in a special manner. It will be pleasing to Him when He observes your standing in the breach to turn away His anger from the land. Perhaps He would deliver the land upon your prayer; and even if

the land were to be destroyed, the eye of the Lord and His mercy will be upon you and your loved ones. You will then have peace in your conscience wherever you go, knowing that you have endeavored to uphold the pillars of both church and country.

If some of the godly have agreed to set apart a day, endeavor to join them, and stir up some other godly person to do likewise. The Lord will most certainly be among you; He will come to you and bless you. It will engender a sweet bond of mutual love, a holy mutual fellowship, and quicken both love and the performance of good works. When you make work of having solitary days of fasting, you will experience that the promise is true and will be fulfilled for you: “Thy Father ... shall reward thee” (Matt 6:18). The Lord will manifest that this is pleasing to Him. He will increase your light, and strengthen your heart in faith; you will be nearer to God in your walk, and lead a life which is more sober and thoughtful; and your conscience will be more tender. You will have more strength against sin, and receive more comfort from the Lord. He who has exercised himself in this has never regretted that he has done so, and we wish to recommend it as an exceptional means unto spiritual growth.

When you thus have determined to observe either a public or secret day of prayer, you must prepare yourself for this ahead of time by removing all obstacles, by being moderate in your intake of food and drink in the evening, and by getting a moderate amount of sleep at night. Confess your aversion for such a day of prayer as a sin before the Lord, and ask that you may be fit to conduct yourself well on this day of prayer. If you intend to observe this with others, pray that the others may be fit for this as well.

If the day of prayer is spent as described above, let your conduct also be appropriate subsequent to this. Rejoice in the evening that you have food to eat, since you are not worthy of one bite of bread. Thank the Lord that He gives it to you in His favor—as having been purchased with the blood of Christ. Be moderate in your use of food as well as in sleeping. Preserve the impression of all that has transpired that day; that is, of all your initiatives toward God and of God’s manifestations toward you. Give close attention as to how God responds to your day of prayer, for God will respond to it. In this way you will accustom yourself to this duty, and discover so much sweetness in it, that you will long to have such a day of prayer by renewal.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

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### Watchfulness

As fasting is conjoined to prayer, so is watchfulness conjoined to prayer: “Watch and pray” (Matt 26:41); “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Eph 6:18); “Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Pet 4:7). We must therefore also take this duty to heart—a duty the Lord Jesus has so solemnly commanded us to perform. “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:37); “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt 24:42).

There is a *spiritual watchfulness* and a *physical watchfulness*. Both are the duty of a Christian and we shall therefore speak of both.

#### *Spiritual Watchfulness Defined*

*Spiritual watchfulness* consists in watching over our soul in a careful and circumspect manner in order that no evil may befall her. Spiritual life is a precious and desirable treasure to the believer, far excelling the entire world and all that is in it. It has many enemies which lie in wait for it—not to be a partaker of it, but to destroy it; they hate it. A Christian is therefore diligent in preserving this life. “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov 4:23). The believer knows the value of that life, is acquainted with his enemies and their activities, loves this life, is desirous to preserve and increase it, takes care that it is not injured, and is thus circumspect and always on guard if there is danger approaching from elsewhere. If he becomes aware of something, he is alert and stands ready with his weapons in hand to turn away the enemy, attacking all those who come too close.

Spiritual watchfulness is exercised with several objectives in

view. First of all, it pertains to *the spiritual influences* of the Holy Spirit, such as light, comfort, and strength—whereby the spiritual life of the soul is strengthened. A Christian prays for this, and during prayer, as well as immediately thereafter, waits to see whether the Lord will grant him something so that he may immediately receive it and seal it within his heart. “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up” (Ps 5:3); “Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors” (Prov 8:34); “Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation” (Mic 7:7).

Secondly, watchfulness pertains to *all that issues forth from the soul*, such as thoughts, words, and deeds, lest the soul be injured by any sin. Instead, there will be a striving that our entire conduct may be according to God’s will, whereby spiritual life increases in strength. “But watch thou in all things” (2 Tim 4:5). A Christian strives for this: “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle” (Ps 39:1); “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me” (Ps 119:59,30). Since the Christian is conscious of his impotence, he cries to God for help. “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Ps 141:3); “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord” (Ps 19:14). The believer guards his heart jealously, and since he knows that there are snares everywhere, he proceeds very cautiously. He is watchful in his every deed and ponders the path of his feet (Prov 4:26). Time and again he seeks counsel and asks, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do” (Acts 9:6). He looks whether the way before him is safe and each time sets down his feet with caution lest he step into a snare. He walks, so to speak, on his toes. This can be ascertained from the word ἀκριβω~φ (*akribos*): “See then that ye walk circumspectly” (Eph 5:15). Then, when he finds all to be smooth, he proceeds courageously. “The Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle” (Zech 10:3,5).

Thirdly, the person who is spiritually watchful also keeps an eye out for *all that enters the soul*, so that no enemy will steal in to harm his spiritual life. He knows his enemies—the devil, the world, and his flesh—and he knows their wickedness and their tireless activity. He is on his guard for that very reason, and he thus “closes the doors and the windows.” “I made a covenant with mine eyes” (Job 31:1);

“He ... stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil” (Isa 33:15). In accordance with the exhortation of the apostle he is on guard against the devil. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8-9). The Christian is on guard against the world when it approaches him with either flattery, threats, or persecutions, conquering all this by faith (1 John 5:4). He is on guard against his flesh, indwelling corruption, and the sin which so easily besets him. The apostle exhorts him to do so: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11).

### *Believers Exhorted to Be Watchful*

Therefore, Christians, stir up your desire to be watchful and make work of it with the courage of a man. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13).

(1) We are by nature very drowsy. Our spiritual life is feeble, weak, has but little vigor, and indwelling corruption will very readily befuddle our understanding. We shall therefore very readily slumber as the bride did: “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Song 5:2). Such was also the experience of the wise virgins: “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (Matt 25:5).

(2) The enemies are wakeful and are tireless in the execution of their assaults. They never miss an opportunity to rob us of an advantage; and if we are not watchful, they will have the advantage.

(3) How scandalous it is if we are assaulted by the enemy due to our lethargy! If we are wounded while wielding the sword, those wounds will soon heal. If, however, we allow ourselves to be conquered due to lethargy, we must come into the presence of the Lord with shame, for we are then without excuse.

(4) The wounds inflicted by the enemy are very grievous; his arrows are poisonous and burrow in deeply. If the balm of Gilead, administered by the Great Physician, did not heal those wounds, they would be the cause of death. They would rob you of your precious treasure—spiritual life—and of all your valuable, spiritual ornaments. “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15).

(5) When we are watchful, however, we need not fear the enemy. How much more honor and praise will then be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord Jesus, who will crown the conqueror with glory! “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life” (Rev 2:7); “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second

death” (Rev 2:11); “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne” (Rev 3:21). Therefore, watch!

### *Guidance unto Watchfulness*

If you therefore are desirous of being spiritually watchful, then use those means you also use to remain physically alert.

(1) He who excessively partakes of food and drink cannot be alert. Therefore, he who wishes to be alert will be moderate and sober. Such is also true here: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always” (Luke 21:34,36).

(2) He who wishes to be watchful seeks the company of those who are watchful with him. We must do likewise in the spiritual realm: “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow” (Eccles 4:9-10).

(3) He who wishes to be watchful will request someone to awaken him if need be. Such is also true here. Since no one but the Lord is able to awaken us and to keep us watchful, we shall thus request of Him in prayer to do so. The Lord will answer this request and arouse us: “He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa 50:4).

(4) He who wishes to be watchful will set his alarm clock, which will arouse him at the appropriate time. This “alarm clock” is the fear of God. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life” (Prov 14:27).

(5) He who wishes to be watchful will not easily and lazily lie down; rather, he will keep himself occupied. Such is also true here, for if we keep ourselves occupied with the reading of God’s Word, prayer, singing, and engagement in the Lord’s work with delight, then, even if we have but little strength, we shall be spiritually watchful. “Watch therefore: blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing” (Matt 24:42,46).

### *Physical Watchfulness*

*Physical watchfulness* consists in depriving one’s self of sleep at a time which is designated for sleep. As God has ordained that man’s life be preserved by means of food and drink, so also by way of sleep—which is the refreshing dew of nature and, so to speak, moistens the brain, thereby refreshing it. If we spend too much time sleeping, we shall feed our vices, weaken our body, and it will be the cause of numerous ills and sicknesses. If we sleep too little, the body will become weak and we shall be unfit for work. Thus both—too much or too little sleep—will cause the mind to be dull and lethargic. The metabolism of the body is not the same in

all men; the one needs more sleep than the other. Thus, one who performs heavy labor needs more sleep than one who leads a quiet and sedentary life. Every godly person ought to know himself in this respect, so that he will not harm his body either way and thus would commit sin. Wakefulness can sometimes be the result of illness, mental torment, anxiety, or an intense desire to commit such sins as gambling or dancing, or the mental reflection upon things which one would indeed desire, and about which one builds castles in the sky. Sometimes we need to be wakeful, either because we are compelled to this by our calling, or because we are determined to complete a set amount of work—doing this in our calling either manually or by way of study. We are not discussing such watchfulness here, but rather a watchfulness of a religious nature.

### *Physical Watchfulness for Religious Reasons*

*To be watchful for religious reasons* is a special religious exercise in which we deprive ourselves of sleep for the entire night or a portion of it. Such time is then used entirely for the purpose of engaging ourselves in prayer, reading, and meditation—in order to crucify the flesh with its lusts and to grow spiritually.

All that we have said in our exposition of fasting is also applicable to our explanation concerning watchfulness. The one is a deprivation of food and the other of sleep. It is a *religious exercise*, for the objective is to seek God in this manner. The time is not spent in being quiet and inactive, but it consists of spiritual activity. It is a *special exercise* and thus we must not engage in it too often, nor make it a daily activity, for this would be injurious to the body, which soon would become unfit for anything.

It consists, first of all, in a *depriving one's self of sleep*. The time involved—that is, when, how long, whether it is the entire night or some time during the night—is entirely a matter of personal choice. It can be at the beginning of the night, in the morning, or in between these, one arising out of sleep and lying down again some time later. We shall then deprive ourselves of sleep; and if we become sleepy, we must fight against it—doing so either with physical means such as getting up and walking around or by putting something tart or bitter in one's mouth; as well as by the use of spiritual means: prayer, crying for the Spirit, and mourning over our listlessness. This is not to suggest that the deprivation of sleep itself is religious in nature, but it merely belongs to the mode of this religious exercise. Watchfulness must be accompanied by spiritual exercises.

Secondly, it consists in a *seeking after God* by means of prayer, reading, meditation, or reflection. We are then not only watchful

because we have the time for it, but rather that we might seek the countenance of God with a tender heart—a tenderness engendered by watchfulness and spiritual wrestling. It is a watchful praying and a prayerful watchfulness; they mutually stimulate each other. This is not an obligation which devolves upon all men, for there can be physical unfitness, or it can be that due to either hard work during the day or their present circumstances, they are in need of strength. They who are either single, have a godly family, or have a godly partner can do this more readily. Others, however, would cause trouble by this, and would stir up more that is not edifying in their homes than that which would edify them during this time. Such can occasionally engage in this while remaining in bed. They are then wakeful in all quietness without anyone noticing that they quietly send up their secret prayers Godward. As much as possible our watchfulness is to be such that no one is aware of it. By way of prayerful watchfulness and watchful prayer, the body (which yields much opportunity for sin and stimulates us toward sin) is subdued and rendered more useful.

#### *Watchfulness Commanded and Exemplified*

(1) The Lord Jesus enjoins His disciples to be watchful in this manner: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt 26:41).

(2) The Lord Jesus has left us an example in this: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35); “And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12).

(3) Such has been the practice of the saints. Jacob remained alone the entire night in order to pray (Gen 32:24; Hos 12:5). David testified of himself: “At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments” (Ps 119:62); “In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Ps 42:8); “I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. ... Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word” (Ps 119:147-148). Asaph did likewise: “My sore ran in the night, and ceased not” (Ps 77:2). The bride sought upon her bed at night, and arose during the night to seek out her precious Jesus (Song 3:1-2; Song 5:5).

The Christians of the church of the first century endeavored to do likewise. Gradually, however, this changed into a superstition, just as popery still has its superstitious *vigils*, to which they attribute great holiness, and deem them to be very meritorious. It was

also much more common during the initial time of the Reformation. If you wish to read a more comprehensive description of this, you ought to read *De Trappen des Geestelijken Levens* (The Steps of Spiritual Life) by my deceased father, Theodore à Brakel.

From all this we observe what earnestness and zeal these holy men had; if we only had more zeal, we would emulate them more. However, alas! this earnestness and zeal is lacking in these days which are void of zeal, and therefore, why am I even speaking here of specific days of fasting and night-watches? However, the Lord can yet let this be a means so that it will not be entirely forgotten. May someone yet be stirred up by this—or at least be convinced of his lack of zeal, being even too hasty in his morning and evening exercises. May he be convinced how far removed he is from a frame which would stir him to arise in the night or that would move him to set apart a portion of the beginning or end of the night to be watchful for the purpose of engaging in prayer.



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## CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

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### Solitude

*Solitude is a separation from all men for a period of time in order to be enabled to express one's self more earnestly and freely as one engages himself in seeking after God.* We designate this as a *separation from all fellowship with men*, in order to distinguish it from that type of solitude of a few of the godly, who at times seek this out in order to communicate with more freedom. Sometimes they choose places of solitude other than those they normally frequent, in order to occupy themselves either with fasting and prayer or with thanksgiving.

#### *Prayerful Solitude*

This is a *seasonal* separation and thus not lifelong as the Papists do in their monasteries, which are nothing more than places of filth, dens of murder, and impure Sodoms. Then there are also the hermits among them who permit themselves to be enclosed within four walls, or who make either the forest or the wilderness their residence. We abhor this manner of life—even if it were void of all superstition and pollution. For, first of all, it is contrary to God's command who has created man as a social creature, saying, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). Secondly, it is God's will that we let our light shine before men in order that they may see our good works and may glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:16); and that we would use our gifts to the advantage, conversion, and edification of other men. We have received our talents to that end, along with the command: "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Thirdly, continual solitude prevents us from becoming acquainted with our corrupt heart, being humbled by this, and striving for its sanctification, there being no opportunity whereby this corruption would manifest itself. If the

heart were good, and if sin would only be the result of circumstances external to the heart, one would be permitted to seek solitude. However, the residual corruption of the heart will be no less sinful in nature when there is no occasion to manifest this sinfulness. We cannot improve the inherent sinfulness of the heart. We learn this gradually as we stumble along. Since we cannot stir up others by our example and our words while in solitude, likewise we can neither be stirred up by the example and words of others, nor will we be able to exercise the communion of saints which we confess. Continual solitude will sooner render us *a beast or a devil* rather than an *angel*. “Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Eccles 4:9-10). Solitude must be but for a season—be it a few hours or a few days.

Seasonal separation occurs in order that we might engage ourselves more earnestly and freely in those exercises whereby we seek after God. To seek solitude in order to be lazy or idle is the work of beasts; to do so in order to commit sin—either alone or with someone else—is an abomination. If, however, our objective is holy, we must also be occupied with holy things, that is, with prayer, reading, meditation, singing, and humble communion with God. “Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom” (Prov 18:1). It is immaterial where we seek such solitude. We can either take a walk, sit down in a deserted field, be somewhere on the farm, or go into the garden.

### *The Heart Must Strive for Solitude*

We must always strive for a disposition of heart that is inclined toward solitude while surrounded by the turmoil of the world and as we interact with people. This means that we are to be loose and divorced from all that is of this world, such as the honor, love, riches, lusts, and pleasures of men. Furthermore, it means to be free from all creatures so that they will neither have dominion over us, conquer our hearts, confuse, nor trouble us. Rather, we are to make use of everything, to the extent that this may be subservient on our journey to eternity, as if we were lord and master, doing so similar to a stranger who is but travelling through. If a cross or tribulation comes our way, we are not to look for creature comfort or help, but in solitude look unto God: “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Ps 102:7); “Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog” (Ps 22:20); “Rescue my soul from their destructions, my

darling<sup>1</sup> from the lions” (Ps 35:17). To this continual solitude also belongs a life with God. To be loose from the creature and to be united to God must go hand in hand. It is thus that Enoch (Gen 5:22), Noah (Gen 6:9), and David walked with God: “I have set the Lord always before me” (Ps 16:8). Such was also true for Asaph: “But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps 73:28). We are to be in such a solitary disposition when interacting with men; however, we are also to separate ourselves from men at our normal devotional time.

### *Special Times of Solitude*

However, in addition to this habitual disposition of solitude and separation at the normal devotional time, it is an exceptional means for the increase in godliness if we occasionally designate a special time in which we fully separate ourselves from the company of men. This can be for some hours or some days. Everyone must proceed here, however, in a manner consistent with his physical or spiritual condition.

The occupation of some will not permit this. If such persons were to take as much time for this as they would perhaps desire—and which others are able to do—they would do harm (perhaps ruin) to themselves and their families, and let their children run loose without supervision. Godliness would be slandered thereby. The Lord is not bound to the means, and if someone with a tender conscience cannot make use of this extraordinary means, the Lord frequently grants him increased manifestations of Himself—more than he would have received in the other way.

The spiritual condition of some is such that they should not engage in long seasons of solitude. Either they are still babes in grace who are not able to spend their time well; or they are subject to extraordinary trials and assaults which are frequently increased by seasons of solitude. Thus, their solitude would be spoiled. Those who are thus assaulted, we counsel as children not to neglect entirely the extraordinary exercise of prayerful solitude. Rather, they should use a shorter period of time (without straining themselves to do something great and extraordinary or to be stirred within in an extraordinary manner), quietly turn to God, and with an expectant frame seek to be alone for some time. If the Lord meets them there, they must yield to the resultant motions; if these motions readily subside, then, by renewal, they are to be expectant. The Lord will occasionally revisit them. If they notice that their thoughts wander toward sinful and vain things, or if the

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<sup>1</sup> The Statenvertaling uses the word “eenzame,” that is, “lonely one.”

trials become too intense and overcome them, it is best to return homeward; the exercise will not be without fruit. The Lord, who will not be sought in vain, will as yet cause them to rejoice over the fact that they were desirous to seek the Lord, and there will be some measure of increase in their godly disposition. Those who do have more time and opportunity, however, also ought to take more time for this. And even if at times all does not go well and they must return homeward wounded and defeated, they must resume this as soon as possible. The Lord takes note of our intention, and this is time and again pleasing to Him.

*Exhortation to be in Solitude*

Therefore, children of God, seek the face of your Father in secret. Take some time occasionally and seek out lonely places in order that there you might wrestle, pray, weep, call for, and wait upon the comforts of the Lord, for:

First, such was the practice of the Lord Jesus, and He has left us an example so that we would walk in His footsteps. At one time He would go to a solitary place (Mark 1:35); at another time He would ascend a mountain all by Himself (Matt 14:23); and at other times He would use the Garden of Gethsemane as His normal place of prayer (Luke 22:39). This has also been the practice of the following saints: Abraham (Gen 15), Isaac (Gen 24:63), and Jacob (Gen 32). Many of the godly have prospered exceptionally in doing so. Therefore, you ought to emulate them and do likewise. If you are singularly desirous, motivated by love, to follow Jesus in this, be assured that He will meet you in love and sweeten your efforts.

Secondly, it is time and again needful for us to recover from the ill disposition we acquire in the midst of the turmoil of the world. Worldly turmoil is very capable of disturbing intimate fellowship with God and of causing us to be estranged from Him. Here the eye sees something, and there the ear hears something, by which our lusts are stirred up, causing us to be drawn away to give attention to these matters. And thus our lusts are ignited, and those ignited lusts frequently engender sinful deeds which harm and defile the soul. The creature has an inherent ability to enchant us—and thus imperceptibly steal our hearts. We frequently do not notice this until we have lost our heart. Everywhere there are snares and opportunities to either lust after honor, be envious, say vain words, lust after riches, boast, or have impure inner motions. Is it therefore not most needful to make a special effort to lift up our heads out of all our failures, seeking restoration of this sweet freedom and to be loose from all creatures? Solitude is a special

means to that end, for in this way we may frequently meet God, and will return to our calling with a strengthened heart.

Thirdly, while engaged in our daily routine, we are frequently closed up within. The heart is hard, the eyes refuse to produce tears, and we become listless and dull. If, however, we then seek a place of solitude other than our ordinary, the heart will frequently be enlarged. It becomes tender, and we can vent our complaints in a more intimate manner. Spiritual desires relative to a variety of matters multiply, and we shall begin to supplicate and weep. We can then persevere and pray that it may touch the heart. Even if there are times when we have had not much else than the privilege and ability to pray, we shall nevertheless go homeward with a quiet joy and we shall frequently think of those extraordinary places; they will be to us a *Jacob's Bethel*.

Fourthly, the Lord is so good that He will meet His children in a special manner when they are in secret—even though it can be at times that all is turned upside down within while they are in secret, that they are overcome with heavy darkness, that the Lord hides His countenance for some time, and they become unbelieving, dull, and entirely empty within. The Lord will yet secretly sustain and cause them to wrestle on. Upon that wrestling the Lord will meet them occasionally in a special manner. He will then manifest Himself with such clarity that this light will be too glorious and strong for them; or He will manifest Himself with such intimacy and love that they will be, so to speak, filled to overflowing. Then again He will grant such assurance of His grace and of their eternal salvation that it will suffice them. He will lead them into the inner chamber and reveal to them His eternal purpose and love for them; the covenant of redemption established between the Father and Christ on their behalf; His wondrous incarnation; the bitterness of the suffering and death of Jesus; the necessity and efficacy of His perfect atonement on their behalf; Christ's resurrection for their justification; His glorious ascension; and His sitting at the right hand of the Father as their Advocate. This, and all that is implied therein, as well as the perfections of God which are revealed, they see in an entirely different light, and it has a different effect upon their heart than has ever been the case previously. He thus leads them into the banqueting house and His banner over them is love, and it is thus that they are satiated with love. When Jacob laid himself down in a lonely place, the Lord revealed Himself to him, so that he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place ... this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:16-17). When he wrestled in solitude on

the other side of the river Jabbok, the Lord blessed him and gave him the name “Israel.” This had such an effect upon his heart that he said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen 32:30). When Moses was alone in the wilderness, the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush and granted him that grace to be sent forth to deliver the people of God from Egypt. When Peter was praying upon the rooftop, he fell into a trance and the Lord revealed the calling of the Gentiles unto him. Therefore, if you desire singular revelations and singular comforts, seek solitary places. You will then experience that God is good to those who seek Him, and you will perceive that you will then return homeward with a radiant soul.

### *Final Guidelines for Solitude*

If, however, you have determined both time and place for this practice and you proceed in this, then see to the following:

(1) Neither demand nor expect too much from your efforts, nor have any expectations from yourself. Rather, come there humbly, empty, unfit, and longing that the Holy Spirit might teach you how to pray.

(2) Be not occupied with other thoughts which pertain to your calling or something else. Rather, during that time conduct yourself as if you were alone with God in the world, casting away and resisting all that comes to mind.

(3) Be especially on guard against your bosom sin, for this would very much defile your solitude and prevent you from receiving a blessing.

(4) Continually occupy yourself with prayer, thanksgiving, waiting, reading, and singing—even if you do so without feeling and cannot get your heart involved in it. The Lord will be pleased with your efforts and will grant you a blessing.

Take heed that you keep your secret place holy,

Or else it will not be safe there.

When do you keep your secret place holy?

When you have intimate fellowship with  
God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This is the translation of the Dutch poem:

Ziet toe, houdt u eenzaam heilig.

Anders is het daar niet veilig.

Wanneer houdt men heilig ‘t eenzaam?

Als men is met God gemeenzaam.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

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### Spiritual Meditation

In addition to solitude, we wish to consider the practice of holy meditation or spiritual reflection. This is a spiritual exercise in which a godly person—having a heart which is separated from the earth and lifted up toward heaven—reflects upon and engages his thoughts toward God and divine things with which he was already previously acquainted. He does so in order to be led further into divine mysteries, to be kindled with love, to be comforted, and to be stirred up to lively exercises.

#### *Spiritual Meditation: A Religious Exercise*

Spiritual meditation is a *religious exercise*. It neither consists in idleness, nor is it a passive disposition in which we are but recipients, permitting ourselves to be illuminated about the divine perfections and divine mysteries—just as a mirror is irradiated by the sun. Instead, it is an activity in which the soul is occupied in reflecting upon and reasoning about these matters, approving of them, delighting in them, is astonished about them and quickened by them.

Occasionally the Lord will manifest Himself to a person without the individual having prepared himself for this. The soul, perceiving this manifestation, will then allow herself to be led into this quietly, will follow gently, and will be active with it. At other times we may resolve to occupy ourselves with meditation, and will either go for a walk or seek another place of solitude to engage ourselves as such. Some are still small in grace, and since they do not know much as yet, there is also not much for them to meditate upon. Others would be able to meditate more, but they close the door at the very outset, being desirous to have at the beginning that which comes last. At the very outset they wish to have clear light, sensibility,

enjoyment, and sweetness; even though these are matters in which meditation culminates, and are the very purpose for which one engages in meditation. Those who have wisdom in this area, however, will bring to mind the perfections of God, His operations in the realm of nature and of grace, as well as His dealings with them. They do this as if they were reading it in a book and permit themselves to be influenced thereby. They reason about these matters in a holy conversation with God. At one moment they give thanks, then they pray, and then again they rejoice. Then they will ask, anticipating an answer, and then again they will strengthen their faith thereby. It is thus that they occupy themselves and intensely involve themselves in doing so. If one thing escapes their attention, they will begin to reflect upon something else. If they have occupied themselves with matters too high for them, darkness coming upon them as a result, they will descend from this level and begin to reflect upon their previous experiences and the way in which God has led them.

It is a requisite for meditation that *the heart be separated from all things and be lifted up on high*. It does not merely suffice to have selected a place of solitude for the regular practice of meditation, but the soul itself must be disposed toward being in solitude; that is, she must be separated from all that is upon earth and be lifted up toward invisible things—as if she were alone with God in this world. During that time we must lay aside all cares, desires, and earthly engagements and turn heavenward toward God. This does not mean that we shall immediately be in such an elevated frame, but we shall be striving for this. There will be ejaculatory sighs with varying intensity for the manifestation of light and grace. While thus striving to attain to a fit frame for this, we shall begin to think and meditate. The soul being empty, seeks to be filled with substance whereby, while meditating, she may be nourished. She offers herself, opens herself, yearns, anticipates, and is active.

#### *The Person Who Meditates*

The one who meditates must be *a godly person*. As the heart is, so will be the thoughts. An unconverted person—a natural person—will also have reflections, but these are consistent with his nature. “He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things” (Prov 16:30); “An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations” (Prov 6:18). He reflects upon his previous ungodly deeds in which he finds renewed delight. Reflecting upon how his neighbor has wronged him, he becomes by renewal wrathful and bitter. He neither knows God nor His gracious operations. He also has no desire for them, and

therefore he neither can nor is willing to reflect upon them. His best mental activity consists in being occupied in the acquiring of knowledge of the Word; however, his objective in doing so is not sound, for it is his objective to be esteemed as a wise man, to be knowledgeable like others, and to be able to converse well. We dealt with such natural meditation in chapter 43.

Instead, spiritual meditation is the activity of a godly person who has spiritual light and life—the one less and the other more. He knows God and has a desire after God; this is the reason why his heart is repeatedly drawn to God. It was so sweet and delightful to him to have seen and tasted something of God that he could not forget it. Time and again it comes to mind and he desires to experience this again in a greater measure. Such meditation gives this experience a new sense of sweetness and stirs up his desires.

### *The Object of Meditation*

The object of such meditation is *divine matters of which he has prior acquaintance*. There is, furthermore, an inquisitive thinking about and meditation upon those matters with which one is not yet acquainted but, nevertheless, desires to be acquainted with. However, the meditation in question here is a *practical* reflection upon matters with which we are acquainted and concerning which we wish to be inwardly moved again by way of meditation. He who is desirous to engage in spiritual meditation will sometimes pursue what comes to mind, and thus follow the Spirit indiscriminately from one subject to the next. If he wishes to be selective and to focus upon one subject, it will be without effect and there will be no progress. We therefore must merely follow and yield to those inner motions which flow forth out of such meditation—prayer, thanksgiving, love—and to follow up what we have resolved to do. At times the heart is empty and does not yield any food for thought; this could result in wandering thoughts. Then we are to select subject matter for meditation, and it is advisable initially to select an easy subject matter, such as the way in which the Lord has led us since childhood; that is, the parents from whom we were born, what transpired in our families, how we were raised, how we conducted ourselves, where we attended school or labored and what has transpired there, the sins committed in our youth, how things progressed after that, and how we conducted ourselves during our teenage years. One could also meditate upon the prosperity and adversity we have encountered, the ways in which the Lord has led us unto the means of salvation, what initially moved us to repent, and how—by way of falling and rising—this came to pass. If we thus proceed from

season to season, from experience to experience, from location to location, and from encounter to encounter, it will time and again stir special motions within us. While thus meditating, however, our heart must remain focused upon the Lord, and we must reflect upon each matter by relating it to the hand of God. In our scheduled devotional times we can also consider the work of redemption, beginning with eternal election, proceeding to the fall, from there to the promise of the Surety and Mediator and forward to the coming of Christ in the flesh—His life and deeds, and His suffering and death. In doing so we must focus upon each aspect to see whether it stirs up a motion within us. Hastiness in meditation will rob us of its fruitfulness. We can also consider the work of creation: its preservation and government, how all things are executed with precision by way of divine providence, and how each matter relates to one or more of God’s attributes as they reveal themselves in His works.

*Spiritual Meditation: A Work of God’s Spirit*

Spiritual meditation is a work of God’s Spirit. The believer in and of himself is not capable of this. In addition to being known from personal experience, Scripture also teaches this: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor 3:5). God initially grants life to the soul, and He quickens that life time and again whereby she desires and seeks for food. He causes matters to come to our mind and governs our thoughts to meditate upon them in a spiritual manner. When a man once possesses spiritual life, this life cannot be idle; it will be active by way of meditation. Since this life originates in heaven, it will also gravitate toward heaven. If it were not repressed by natural corruption, this life would always, without impediment, be exercised in holy meditation. Since spiritual life is repressed, however, it wrestles with this corruption and will break forth unto holy meditation. “My heart is inditing a good matter” (Ps 45:1). To that end it is time and again needful that there be the influence of the Holy Spirit whereby He lifts up and maintains life. Such is the manner in which the regenerate man meditates; however, he is moved to that end by the Spirit of God.

*The Objective of Meditation: Growth in Grace*

The all-encompassing goal and objective of meditation is the building up and growth of spiritual life. More particularly, it will be our objective:

(1) to acquaint ourselves with God and to have communion with Him, since that constitutes the felicity of the soul;

(2) to rejoice and delight ourselves in God—in the beholding of whose countenance there is fullness of joy;

(3) to be kindled with love toward God, to believe in and sense God’s love, and by renewal to be sweetly moved in love toward God;

(4) to be comforted when we are downcast, for by meditation upon former days and the works and perfections of God, the soul will generally find comfort and refreshment;

(5) to be quickened in sanctification, for by way of such spiritual meditation and reflection, as well as a communing with God in solitude, the soul will acquire a good habitual disposition. She has experienced how good it is to be near unto God and she knows that sin will rob her of this. She has understood something of God’s holiness and that He is worthy to be obeyed and she has increased in her love toward God. Thus, meditation renders her more zealous to walk in the way of the Lord’s commandments.

These are indeed the matters we shall be striving for, and the Lord will at times also manifest Himself upon such meditation—however, not always. It frequently happens that meditation is very lifeless, and that one neither finds delight nor sweetness in it so that he needs to desist. Such can occasionally be God’s wise and sovereign dispensation. At times this can be the result of meditation not being a habitual practice, as well as a lack of experience in this heavenly art. At other times it can be caused by our listlessness toward this work, and the fact that the soul is ill-disposed toward this work. We must therefore not neglect this work, however, but resume it at another time. And if our occupation with this cannot be lengthy, we need to make it shorter—and we shall indeed experience that it is not in vain.

#### *Believers Exhorted*

Therefore, you who are lovers of God and of holiness, learn this secret art which is practiced but little, for:

First, God commands it; and since you are both obligated and willing to be obedient unto God in other matters, such must also be the case toward this duty. Consider the following injunctions: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh 1:8); “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut 8:2).

Secondly, meditate upon the examples of the saints and let them be examples for you. There is the blessed virgin Mary: “But Mary

kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). There is David: “When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches” (Ps 63:6); “O Lord, consider my meditation” (Ps 5:1); “Let ... the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight” (Ps 19:14). And consider Asaph: “I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Ps 77:5-6).

Thirdly, it is the very nature of God’s children to be desirous for this. Your heart is inclined toward this and you deem those happy who are thus engaged. Why then do you oppose the new man? Beloved, yield to your new nature. Consider in this respect Ps 1:2: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.”

Fourthly, the very essence of sweetness is to be found herein, and it is profitable work. “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:34); “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee” (Ps 139:17-18). How much profit there is to be found in this! It consists in having fellowship with God, to enjoy His intimate affection, to receive a foretaste of heaven, to be changed into His image, to be adorned with the luster of His glory, and to enjoy all that your soul finds delight in. What more could you wish upon earth? Therefore, engage yourself in this exercise and become accustomed to it. Even if it is a difficult and arduous task at first, it will subsequently become more delightful, and the Lord will not permit you to seek Him in vain.

I do not wish to prescribe rules to you. Begin with it and you will experience yourself which way is best for you. Only make sure that you separate yourself fully, doing so with the intention and the desire to think of nothing else during that time. Let your heart go out in prayer for the reception of the Spirit, for quickening grace, as well as for guidance. If you perceive that you cannot make a beginning with this, then read a portion in the Word of God or sing a psalm.

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CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

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Singing

*Singing is a religious exercise by which, with the appropriate modulation of the voice, we worship, thank, and praise God.*

It is a *religious exercise*, for we make use of the skill and sweetness of our voice to move others to have dealings with God. God has given man a voice to make his thoughts known to others. He has given man the ability to modulate his voice to either a high or a low pitch, or to speak slowly or rapidly, thereby enabling him to render his voice sweet and pleasant. It is also God's will that we shall use our voice in prayer, thanksgiving, and our speaking to Him: "Let Me hear thy voice" (Song 2:14). Since the modulation of our voices at a suitable rhythm is capable of unlocking our hearts and stirring our emotions, God thus also wills that we shall lift up our hearts to Him in singing: "... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16). However, our voice and the melody in and of themselves are not pleasing to God; rather, it is the motion of the heart relative to the spiritual matters which we express before the Lord in singing which pleases Him. Both the voice and the melody are means to bring us into a spiritual frame and to lift up our hearts heavenward—as well as the hearts of those who hear us.

*The Proper Use of the Voice*

To singing belongs the *appropriate modulation of the voice*. One can sing in an unskilled manner when, for instance, we have an inclination to sing while being alone in order to give expression to those matters about which we are reading (and are recorded in non-poetic form), or those which issue forth from a godly heart. This is done while modulating the voice between a high and a low pitch and by singing either slowly or rapidly—not in an artistic

manner but according to the motions of the heart. A very godly farmer, whom I knew very well, used to say, “When I am alone in my field, I can sing all psalms, even though I do not know their tunes.” Many of the godly will be able to confirm this from their own experience. The Lord has given some people the ability to create artistic pieces of music which express the affections of the heart in a marvelous manner and wondrously stir up the emotions. As the builders of Noah’s ark received no advantage from the structure they built, it entirely being intended for Noah and his family, such is frequently also the case here. Many musicians greatly exert themselves; however, it is to the advantage of the godly. The entire world and all that is contained in it are theirs. This is also true for all forms of art; they may freely make use of them. The manner in which someone is moved by music will be consistent with the nature of his heart. A natural man will but be moved in a natural sense, whereas the melody will move the spiritual heart in a spiritual sense.

### *The Various Types of Songs*

Some musical compositions are of a *stately and dignified* nature, by which the heart is inclined toward solemnity and reverence. Such is true for the tunes of the psalms of David which are sung in the church. Some are of a *melancholy nature* by which we are moved to be sorrowful—yes, even to weeping. Others are of a *jubilant* nature whereby the heart is lifted up to jubilate; such is the singing of the psalms in the Scottish churches. Again, others are of a very *rhythmic nature*, whereby the heart is stirred up to skip and leap for joy—as Hannah said in her heart: “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord” (1 Sam 2:1). Other compositions are very *stern* in nature, whereby the heart is ignited to anger and, so to speak, demands vengeance. If, however, the heart is spiritual, this spiritual heart, by way of various tunes, will become aware of spiritual motions consistent with these tunes, and by such inner motions will be drawn to God—be it prayerfully, jubilantly, joyously, or while giving thanks and praising Him. Thus, the spiritual man does not merely relate to the melody; rather, the melody is complementary to the spiritual matters, and spiritual matters complement the melody—in both cases the heart is involved. Thus, it can be that the heart, being in such a frame, will either yield both subject matter and melody, or the subject matter and melody will move the heart in such a manner. The more pleasant the voices or instruments are which sing or play these melodies, the more the heart is moved. When Jehoshaphat and two kings showed Elisha the peril in which their armies were, due to lack of water, he said, “But

now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him” (2 Kings 3:15). By way of the playing of this instrument his spirit was quickened, and having been brought into a fitting frame, he received the revelation that they would receive water.

### *Singing Practiced from the Beginning of Time*

Creatures have engaged in singing from the very beginning of creation. The angels, having been created upon the first day and being a witness to creation the following five days, glorified God concerning this in singing: “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). Not all that transpired prior to the time of Moses has been recorded, but it is credible that the godly, from the time of Adam, have delighted themselves in singing. Job, who is considered to have lived during Abraham’s time, makes mention of singing in his book: “Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night” (Job 35:10). After the children of Israel had left Egypt and had gone through the sea on dry ground, they praised the Lord in song: “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord” (Exod 15:1). The ninetieth psalm has the following title: *A prayer of Moses*. Moses, his death being imminent, gave the children of Israel a song which had been dictated to him by the Lord (Deut 31:16-30). After Sisera had been defeated, Deborah sang a song (Judg 5:1).

David was the sweet psalmist (2 Sam 23:1). To sing unto the Lord with instruments, and to lift up voice and heart to God, was his daily work. In His goodness the Lord has given us David’s psalms in His Word. We have the substance of them, but both the Hebrew art of poetry and the melodies are mostly concealed from us. I maintain that all the music which is now to be found in the world is not comparable to David’s music. I believe that the melody was then composed in harmony with the motions of the heart, giving expression to this in a most appropriate manner. Since the melody proceeded from a spiritual frame of heart, it was wondrously capable of stirring these emotions in others as well. The melody of a psalm could thus not be used for any other song, since that melody was only applicable to that inner motion and that given word. The combination of musical tones, inner motions, and words was such that it would cause all who heard it to be in ecstasy. Our music does not have such an effect. We sing the melody irrespective of whether it is consistent with both the inner motions of the heart and the words. Since the art of poetry and song primarily consisted in this at that time, it is simply not practical to seek to discover David’s poetic art-form—much less the melodies

he composed. Nevertheless, there are some elements here and there which are also to be found in Greek, Latin, and Dutch poetry.

### *Scripture Enjoins Us to Sing*

David did not merely sing by himself, but continually exhorts everyone to sing. For that purpose he also submitted his psalms to be sung in the temple by the appointed chief singers. The textual references to this are so numerous that there is no need to point them out. After David's time we also find psalms among the prophets, along with many exhortations to sing. We find such exhortations also among those prophecies which declare that in the days of the New Testament men would praise the Lord with singing. "Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things" (Isa 12:5); "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine" (Isa 27:2); "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth" (Ps 96:1).

Not only are we exhorted in the Old Testament to sing, but this is true for the New Testament as well. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:19); "... teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16); "Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13); "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Cor 14:15); "And they sung a new song" (Rev 5:9).

### *Other Spiritual Songs in Addition to the Psalms*

A number of godly men have composed spiritual songs for this purpose with a variety of melodies. It appears that *Luther* has been the first one to do so during the Reformation. His songs are still sung today with edification by the Lutherans in their churches, as well as privately by us. In our days the unforgettable *Justus Van Lodesteyn* has composed a songbook which is second to none as far as spirituality is concerned. *Cl. Marot* has put the first fifty of David's psalms to rhyme in the French language, and *Theodore Beza* the other one hundred. Subsequent to this, *Claud. Gaudemelius*, a famous musician in Paris (who perished as a martyr in the massacre of Paris), composed the melodies, which could not have been improved upon in the judgment of musicians. *Petrus Dathenus* has translated them in poetic form from the French, preserving the identical tunes. It would be desirable if an artistic and godly poet were to take upon himself the task to improve them by putting them to poetry in an identical fashion, and in better harmony with the original text, so that they could be accepted for public use in the churches.<sup>3</sup> The decision of

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<sup>3</sup> This occurred in the year AD 1773.

the Dutch Synods has been very correct indeed, namely, that none other but the Psalms of David are to be used in the churches.

### *The General Lack of Singing Lamented*

It amazes me that the godly in the Netherlands have so little desire to sing, and also engage in this very infrequently. It is true that singing little is consistent with the lackadaisicalness of our nation (compared to other nations). Nevertheless, worldly people sing quite a bit, but they sing vain songs which stir up the heart toward vanity and immorality. The godly are, however, generally silent in these parts. The one says, “I am too busy”; the other, “I have no voice”; the third, “I do not know any of the melodies”; the fourth, “I do not dare for fear the neighbors would hear me and deem me to be a hypocrite.” All of this is, however, not truly the problem, but it is a lack of desire. If the heart were more spiritual and joyous, we would more readily praise the Lord with joyful song and thereby stir up ourselves and others. I am here not only speaking of singing in church. (Even there many do not sing; and for some the very best they can do is read the psalm silently.)

### *Exhortation to Sing*

It is thus needful that I stir up everyone to sing—not only psalms, but also spiritual songs. Therefore, believers, dispense with this listlessness. “Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing” (Ps 100:2).

First, you must know that singing is not a neutral matter in which you may or may not engage. Rather, it is God’s command. As we have shown you before, God requires this from you and desires to be served by you in this manner. Consider these and similar quotes and impress them upon your heart as being mandatory. Begin to engage in this duty with an obedient heart; break open your mouth and your closed heart will open as well.

Secondly, God has created this ability in the very nature of man. This is to be observed in children of three or four years old. Take note of how they walk around the house while singing at the same time. Observe how even in nature the birds in their own way already praise their Creator early in the morning by way of singing. If you go outside in the morning, or if you have birds in your home, you will hear it. Will the birds and small children rebuke you, and would you, who have the greatest reason in the world to sing joyously, be dumb and silent?

Thirdly, it is the work of angels, for they glorify the Lord in song (cf. Job 38:7; Luke 2:13-14; Rev 5:11-12), and it is the work of the church upon earth and in heaven: “And they sung a new song,

saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9); “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne ... and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3); “And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty” (Rev 15:3). If you have no desire to sing, then what will you do in church and in heaven? Furthermore, if you are desirous to magnify the Lord with an eternal hallelujah, you should presently begin upon earth.

Fourthly, God is particularly pleased when His children praise Him in song. There where the Lord is sweetly praised in song, there He will come with His blessings. “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Ps 22:3). It is noteworthy to consider what transpired at the dedication of the temple. “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one ... that then the house was filled with a cloud ... so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God” (2 Chron 5:13-14). When Jehoshaphat, together with his army, lifted up their voices in joyous exclamation and song (2 Chron 20:22), the Lord defeated their enemies. When Paul and Silas sang praises unto God in the middle of the night, the doors of the prison were opened and the bands of all the prisoners were loosened (Acts 16:25-26). Therefore, if you are desirous to please the Lord, and delight in having the Lord visit your soul and desire to experience His help, then accustom yourself to singing.

Fifthly, singing will move a heart which frequently remains unmoved during prayer. It can be that while singing the tears will drip upon the book. Have you not frequently experienced this? Have not you been stirred up by hearing the singing of others? Others will therefore also be stirred up by your singing. The Papists in France knew this, and therefore they strictly forbade the singing of psalms and meted out cruel punishment for this—even prior to massacring the church. Therefore, no longer be silent, but lift up your voices—in spite of the devil and all the enemies of God—to the honor and glory of your God, as this has done you too much good already (and still does) than that you would refrain from thanking the Lord with songs of praise. You must furthermore do so in order that you might stir up others to serve the Lord with gladness. It will then become manifest to all natural men that godliness is a joyous rather than a grievous life, and they will

become desirous for this as well. And if you sing, sing with understanding, with a fervent desire, conscious of the presence of the Lord (and thus reverently), with a modest demeanor, and with both inner and external attentiveness, so that it may all be becoming before the Lord and to the edification of others who surround us.



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## CHAPTER EIGHTY

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### Vows

*A vow is a commitment toward God. It is a voluntary commitment either to perform a good deed or to refrain from something (one having the capacity to do so), either as an expression of gratitude or to promote our spiritual well-being.*

A vow is a commitment. He who previously may have been without obligation in a given matter, is placed under obligation by means of a vow. Man is under obligation to God in all that he possesses and does. This devolves from the fact that He is God and man a creature. Every human being is acquainted with this obligation, but by his actions he violates this obligation. He who enters into the covenant of grace obligates himself (who actually already was under obligation) with approbation, delight, and willingness to be the Lord's eternally and to be governed by the Spirit of God according to His will. He gives his hand to the Lord and frequently reiterates this commitment with all his heart. Observe this in the following passages: "One shall say, I am the Lord's" (Isa 44:5); "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant" (Ps 116:16). This is one and the same thing as reference being made to a swearing unto the Lord that we shall serve Him. "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice" (2 Chron 15:12,14); "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments" (Ps 119:106). In such swearing they did not have in view a perfect observance of the law, for they knew in advance that they were neither capable of, nor would they in reality do this; thus they could not swear to do so. Rather, their focus was upon the service of God in general; namely, that they would neither forsake the

Lord nor depart from the way of obedience, and thus not turn to idolatry. Their focus was, therefore, upon an unfeigned and heartfelt intent to serve the Lord in all things with a willing soul. As such, and from this perspective, we may and must obligate ourselves to God by way of a vow. If such a person sins subsequent to this, it will be contrary to his intention, and it is thus not a breaking of his vow. For he, knowing that it was beyond his power not to sin, did not vow that he would not sin at all.

#### *A True Vow: A Commitment Toward God*

It is a commitment *toward God*. This is not only a commitment toward God, but the promise itself is made toward God; that is, whatever one promises to either do or refrain from doing, he will do Godward. Such promises are neither to be made to angels nor deceased saints, for that would be as much an act of idolatry as worshiping them, as the making of a vow is a religious exercise. When we promise to give something to the poor, such a promise is not made to the poor but rather to God; namely, that we shall bestow our gift upon the poor. “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word” (Num 30:2).

(1) A vow must pertain to a *good matter*. Some matters are good in and of themselves; God has commanded them and we are thus under obligation to do them. The believer approves of this obligation, applies this to himself, and frequently repeats it with all his heart. Some matters are, however, inherently neutral. As far as usage is concerned man is free to either avail himself of them or not—such as the consumption of wine, tea, or fruit; that is, in cases other than illness or given circumstances which necessitate their use. When a person uses such inherently neutral matters, they are then no longer neutral in nature. Then we must use them in faith, according to precept, and to the honor of God. In the Old Testament, vows related primarily to free will offerings. They could not promise, however, to sacrifice either swine or men, for that was an abomination to the Lord. Having made a vow in regard to a free will offering and upon proceeding with the sacrifice, they had to sacrifice according to the law. Such is also true for us, for when we make a vow, it must pertain to lawful matters.

(2) A vow must relate to a specific matter we are acquainted with as to both its nature and circumstances, and of which we are assured that we may and are able to fulfill. Jephthah sinned in this respect when he made a general vow to the Lord. His general vow was inherently incorrect for it pertained to people who would

come out of the door of his house and meet him, since he could not expect that sheep or calves would come to meet him. If he did indeed sacrifice his daughter, who came out to meet him, as a burnt-offering, he did commit an abomination—he who otherwise defeated the children of Ammon by faith (Heb 11:32). Had his faith been but a miraculous faith and he, in reality, was an unconverted man, he could have easily committed such an abominable deed. Since, however, he was in truth a godly man, and his zeal having enticed him to make such a reckless and abominable vow—if he indeed executed the vow he had made, he would have committed a double evil and sinned dreadfully against the Lord. It then serves as a beacon for us not to make evil, reckless, and unrestricted vows; furthermore, even if we have made them, we are not to perform them. It is not a sin to renege on an evil and reckless vow; rather, it is a virtue if we do not perform it due to the fear of, and in obedience to, God. The sin is in the vow itself. We need to humble ourselves about that, but not about the breaking of that vow; for that we must give thanks. Thus, if someone greatly desires to have a son and prays for a son, promising to give this son back to the Lord by causing him to become a minister, he sins if he made this vow without mentioning any conditions—such as, evident fitness for this office and willingness to yield himself to this with his entire heart, as well as whether he himself would be able to meet the expenses without shortchanging his family and other children. Furthermore, if such qualifications would not be present and he would nevertheless cause him to be a minister, he would then sin in a double sense.

### *The Making of Vows*

*Objection:* One might object and say, “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Ps 15:4).

*Answer* (1) This is applicable when the vow does not pertain to an evil matter, or if its execution does not lead us into sin. Even if, however, the performance of the vow were difficult and injurious for us; even if we would wish that we had not made that vow; and even if we would be able to perform it without sinning and without harm to ourselves, our loved ones, or others, then we must nevertheless perform it.

(2) However, according to the original text this passage reads as follows: “He that sweareth *to do evil.*” Thus, the meaning is as follows: The godly person will maintain his tender uprightness to such an extent that, even if he had sworn to do evil, he would

nevertheless not do it, and thus not depart from his uprightness; he would then not perform such an evil oath.

(3) It must be a matter *which is within the realm of what we are capable of doing*. It would be a reckless vow if someone were to promise God that for the rest of his life he would not commit one more sin; or that, to all eternity, he would not again commit that sin which so easily besets him. Furthermore, he would grievously sin if he were to attach an obligation to punishment to this vow in the event that he were to commit it again. For he would then have made a vow which would be beyond the realm of his ability, not having given heed to his evil heart. He must humble himself about such a vow, and the Lord is so good that He will not cause that judgment to come upon such an upright person which he had invoked upon himself out of great hatred for sin, failing to take his own corruption into account. It would also be a sinful vow—and it would be sinful if he were to perform it—if someone were to promise a sum of money to the poor which he either would not be able to produce or, if he were able, would be to the detriment of himself and his children, bringing them outside of the circumstances in which God had placed them. This also pertains to all other things which are beyond the realm of our ability or those that could be beyond our control prior to the time that the vow is to be performed. Thus, we may not make vows of perpetual duration relative to neutral matters, for we do not know what can transpire in the meantime. Consider, for instance, people who presently have the gift of continence. They may not promise to remain unmarried during their entire lifetime, for their disposition could change and other circumstances could surface, making it advisable for them to marry. We must thus be very careful in making vows.

(4) When we do make vows, we must not act as if we were making a business deal with God, such as: “If Thou wilt give me this, then I will give Thee this.” Rather, it must be made as an *expression of gratitude* toward God. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High” (Ps 50:14). When we are in need, we are to pray for deliverance. Included with the grounds which we present in our petition should be that we desire to serve the Lord with joy, and to thank and glorify Him upon having delivered us—and that we would also manifest our gratitude by desisting from, giving, or doing a given thing.

*The other reason for making vows must be the promotion of our spiritual well-being.* There can at times be something of an external nature which one either may or may not do, and we experience

that either doing or not doing this causes continually a falling into sin. Thus, the believer prays against this sin, and as he prays, promises God that within a specified period of time, he will either refrain from or perform a given deed (it being within his capacity and control to do so), so that in the intervening period there may be and remain an improvement in his circumstances. Everyone must know for himself what the conditions for such a commitment are. For example, one can promise that during a specified period:

—One will not drink wine, even though one presently does, and will subsequently continue to, drink wine. It would then not be possible to detect that one had made a vow, nor would it render one suspect of hypocrisy.

—One will deprive himself of food and eat only once a day. This is then not intended to be a day of fasting, but rather to restrain his nature from being stirred up to lust.

—One will not use a given external adornment, without which he would nevertheless be adorned in an honest and moderate manner—doing all this to keep his pride in check.

In all such matters, great attention must be given to the circumstances. We must not put snares in our own way by either doing or not doing something which, by way of attending circumstances, would be too noticeable.

(5) If, when considering all the circumstances, we have made a good vow, we must also be very conscientious in performing it. “Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God” (Ps 76:11); “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee” (Deut. . 23:21); “Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Eccles 5:5).

David was most conscientious in this as is evident in Ps 66:13-14: “I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.”



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## CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

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### Concerning Experience

Experience is a matter only few are acquainted with and is utilized by even less. However, it is of much benefit. The proverb says: “Experience is the best teacher.” When we intend to hire someone, we ask, “Does he have experience?” A doctor, captain, or craftsman who has experience will be most in demand. Such is also true in the spiritual realm. Experience engenders the prosperity of the Christian, and thus we also wish to say something concerning this.

Experience is a godly exercise, consisting in a gathering of numerous noteworthy incidents for the purpose of using them to our benefit and that of others.

*It is a godly exercise.* “A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this,” says the psalmist in Ps 92:6. However, it is one of the activities of the godly who do gather such a treasure. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice, the wise will observe these things, and “they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord” (Ps 107:42-43). They exercise themselves in this in a godly manner: with a godly heart, with godly intent, and with a godly objective.

This exercise consists in a *gathering of numerous noteworthy incidents*. God not only gives *commands* and *promises* to His children. These must be heeded with much attention and an obedient heart, for: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22); “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments” (Ps 119:6). However, God also manifests Himself by numerous works. He frequently delivers His people and specific individuals in a remarkable manner. He comforts them when they grieve most bitterly, and executes extraordinary judgments upon the oppressors of His people. He preserved Noah in the ark, delivered His people Israel with a

mighty hand out of Egypt, and fed them forty years in the wilderness with bread rained down from heaven. He delivered David out of the hand of Saul, Daniel from the lions' den, his companions out of the fiery oven, and Peter out of prison. He destroyed Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and slew 185,000 men in one night by the hand of an angel in the army which had besieged Jerusalem. Yes, the entire Bible is filled with numerous accounts of deliverances of His people as well as of judgments upon their oppressors. God's children will bring together all such and similar deeds of God. They seek them out, meditate upon them, and analyze them carefully. They imprint them in their memories and, so to speak, establish a mental file.

### *The Objective of Remembering God's Dealings*

The objective is not to be inquisitive only in order to be knowledgeable and able to talk about them. Rather, their objective is to derive personal benefit from such reflection in order to be comforted and strengthened. The church does so to help and comfort others by recounting God's dealings with the godly when in need; and also to warn others thereby, relating to them God's common dealings with such sinners, and thus to arouse them and bring them to repentance.

First, the Lord wills that His people gather together a treasure of experiences and make use of them at all occasions: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deut. . 8:2); "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" (Deut. . 32:7); "Remember His marvellous works that He hath done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth" (Ps 105:5).

Secondly, we know this to have been the practice of the saints who have given examples to be followed by us. David was thus engaged: "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands" (Ps 143:5). Asaph did likewise: "I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings" (Ps 77:12). "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Thirdly, we can infer this from the purpose for which God has performed these deeds, has caused them to be recorded, and has decreed that they should be told to others, namely, that the following generation would know them and thus be dissuaded from sinning, be exhorted to godliness, and be strengthened by trusting in God's help. "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told

us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Ps 78:2-7).

If to that end God has done so many great deeds for His people, and has caused these deeds to be recorded for this purpose as well, it is our duty to give heed to them, attentively take note of them, and commit them to our memories, so that we may have them readily at hand when they are applicable to our circumstances.

*The Sources from Which Experiences May Be Gleaned: Scripture, Church History, and Personal Experience*

This treasure of various incidents, judgments, deliverances, and divine comforts are gleaned first of all from the Word of God; a great variety of divine deeds has been recorded there. We human beings are but of yesterday, and our experience pertains to but a very small time frame. The goodness of the Lord has provided us, however, with a history of His deeds which originates at the beginning of this world and will continue until its very end. We ought to make a study of all God’s dealings with His people by attentively examining them one by one. We would thus immediately have an example at hand for every event that occurs, and this would be subservient for instruction or encouragement. Many of the Scottish divines exercised themselves in this in an exceptional manner, and have shown a marvelous ability to bring forth a history from the Bible and to apply it.

Secondly, this treasure can also be derived from church history, books about martyrs, and the biographies of the godly by *Melchior Adamus* in Latin, by *Corput* in Dutch, and by *Koelman*, who has added several biographies as an appendix in *The Christian’s Great Interest*. We may observe the good hand of God in the fact that so many incidents have been recorded and have come into our hands. In all our encounters we time and again conduct ourselves as fools; but such recorded incidents immediately yield light, counsel, comfort, and courage. Add to this the experiences of the godly with whom you have fellowship. In the Lord’s providence you may have the privilege of enjoying such company, enabling you to hear how the Lord has dealt with them and what manner of deliverances

they have experienced—so that you would take note of it and derive benefit yourself from it.

Thirdly, the history of your own life—if you would but attentively take notice—would yield you a treasure of experiences. I shall show you the way as to how you may glean many experiences from your own life. Answer for yourself the following questions:

(1) From whom have you descended? Who were your father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, uncles, aunts, and cousins? What is your status in the world—high or low? In what city, village, or on what street or lane were you born? Were they rich or poor, honorable or despised, ungodly or godly? At what occasion did your ancestors or you come to this country, city, or village?

(2) How were you raised—in simplicity or luxuriously? What did your parents do to earn a living? Was there peace or discord in your home? What was their religious persuasion? Was God's Word read in your home? Were you instructed in the knowledge of the truth? How did you conduct yourself in your parental home?

(3) What specific events transpired in your parental home? What difficulties, perplexities, fears, and concerns have there been, and what was the ultimate outcome?

(4) Where did you attend school, where were you employed, and what did you encounter there? With whom have you resided? With whom have you kept company? What trade have you plied? What did you encounter there and how did you conduct yourself? What trials and accidents did you have, and what was the ultimate outcome?

(5) How did you live during your childhood, during your teenage years, and in your marriage? To what sins have you cleaved? In what manner did the Lord deliver you from your perplexities, and by what means?

(6) If you are converted, have you been a changed person from your youth? If not, what thoughts did you entertain about your present and future state? By what means were you brought under an efficacious ministry? By what occasion did you come into the company of godly people? How did you come to the knowledge of the truth, and how did you come under conviction? What transactions did you at first have with Christ? What anxious strife and assaults did you endure and in what manner were you delivered from them? What comforts, strengthenings of your faith, and assurances have you enjoyed? What vicissitudes have you experienced? Do you still remember some encounters? Do you still know those places where you were in great distress, were enabled to pray in an extraordinary manner, and where all was made exceptionally

well? What bodily discomforts have you encountered? In what manner were you strengthened in them, how did the Lord grant deliverance, and by what means did He do so?

*Failure to Reflect upon God's Dealings Rebuked*

If you had taken careful note of and remembered all these things, or if as yet you would betake yourself to bring all these to remembrance and record them, how great a collection of experiences you would now have! How useful they would now be to you, and how great would be the benefit you would derive from them!

How have you fared, however? Did you already gather a treasure of experiences? How many of the godly will be ashamed when they perceive that such was their duty, having had a large field from which they could have gleaned a large supply! Yes; you ought to be ashamed, for:

First, God sharply rebukes you for this. "They soon forgot His works" (Ps 106:13). This was a sin of the disciples, and this sin has been described: "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52).

Secondly, it being a sin, it likewise issues forth from sin, namely:

(1) The sin of inattentiveness. One permits God to work, chastise, and bless, and yet no one gives heed to it. This is the sin of the unconverted: "They regard not the work of the Lord" (Isa 5:12); "A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this" (Ps 92:6).

(2) The sin of unbelief; when evil befalls man, he considers the secondary causes. Even though he does not deny God's hand in it, he does not believingly note it to be such. If God blesses and grants a person his desire, he then acts as if it came about by chance and as if the matter would have come about even if he had not prayed—and thus he disregards God. "If I had called, and He had answered me (*by granting me the matter for which I prayed*); yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice (*namely, that God did so upon my prayer*)" (Job 9:16).

(3) The sin of forgetfulness; we then carefully take note of the matter as it occurs, but make no use of it, and do not deeply impress it upon our heart. It therefore does not come to mind when it would suit our situation: "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength" (Isa 17:10).

Thirdly, this gives birth to many of your unseasonable spiritual conditions, as well as the fact that you remain in them for such a long time. You are ignorant concerning God's dealings with His children

and with yourself, and you thus remain in the dark. This in turn engenders the instability regarding your spiritual state, your excessive inner turbulence, your discouragements, and many other evil frames and sins. How grievous it then is to you that you have stored away so few experiences! How grievous it will be to have kept yourself in such a low and childlike condition for such a long time, considering that you could have been a steadfast, stable, and strong Christian! Oh, how grievous it is to you that you have given so little heed to God's dealings; that you have let Him work, so to speak, in vain, and that you have not manifested any gratitude to Him for this! Humble yourself before the Lord and seek forgiveness.

### *Believers Exhorted*

Therefore, seek to gather a treasure of experiences for yourself from those spacious fields to which we have directed you.

First, this teaches us to discern and acknowledge the dealings of God and to thank and glorify the Lord for this. It is to that end that the Lord has manifested Himself to you by way of His works, and it is your salvation, delight, and felicity to be thus engaged. Observe this in Ps 18, for when David reflected upon the mercies of the Lord previously manifested toward him, he concludes, "Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy name. Great deliverance giveth He to His king; and showeth mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Ps 18:49-50). He expresses himself likewise in Ps 103:2: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Secondly, it humbles you when, on the one hand, you consider your ancestry, insignificance, and sinfulness, and on the other hand the wondrous leadings, protections, and deliverances according to body and soul: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands" (Gen 32:10); "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto" (2 Sam 7:18). This humble disposition is most pleasing to the Lord and He multiplies His blessings to such. "God ... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet 5:5).

Thirdly, it kindles a strong desire in believers for that sweet frame in which they previously were. This will be accompanied with tenderness of heart, considering that they are presently so far removed from this desirable frame and have to do without it. "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness" (Job 29:2-3); "Lord, where are Thy

former lovingkindnesses” (Ps 89:49); “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday” (Ps 42:4). Observe this also in regard to the church: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” (Ps 137:1). Oh, how many a tear flows out of our eyes when we consider our previous circumstances and compare our present circumstances to them!

Fourthly, it sustains us in times of distress and it can serve as a means to recovery. We shall then reason as follows: “The Lord does not change, and He will finish the work which He has begun in a person. The fact is that the Lord has previously been gracious to me. How zealously did I seek the Lord at that time and how abundantly was the Spirit of prayer poured out upon me! I still remember how I was enabled to pour out my heart before the Lord with many tears and with much perseverance. I have not yet forgotten how I was able to receive Jesus as my Surety and how I entrusted my soul to Him; how I received assurance concerning my salvation; how I loved Jesus; how I delighted and rejoiced in the enjoyment of my love relationship with the Lord, and how painstakingly I refrained from sin.” Thus the soul, while estranged from the Lord, will encourage herself. She will say, “The Lord remains the same, His love does not change, and He will again come to me.” It is thus that the soul supports and encourages herself with her previous experiences. Observe this with David: “Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land” (Ps 143:4-6); and also with Asaph: “I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Ps 77:5-6).

Fifthly, it causes us to trust in the Lord and, while exercising this trust, to be encouraged in the performance of our duty. Paul found strength in his previous experience: “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (2 Cor 1:10). It made David courageous: “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37).

#### *Reflection upon Past Experience Engenders Spiritual Virtues*

Sixthly, experience engenders the exercise of all manner of spiritual virtues, such as faith, hope, love, prayer, patience, and holiness.

(1) It engenders a *godly life*: “What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul” (Isa 38:15). He remembered his previous trial, and this now prompted him to refrain himself from sin and to walk carefully, lest he come into such straits again (Ps 116:8-9).

(2) It engenders *faith*. The disciples, who twice had witnessed how the Lord Jesus had fed thousands of people with a few loaves, had not taken note of the miracle of the loaves, and therefore their faith faltered, for their faith was not in exercise when at another occasion they had forgotten to take bread along (Mark 8:14,16). If, however, we may have gathered a treasure of experiences, this habit will render us strong in the faith.

(3) It engenders *hope*: “And experience (worketh) hope” (Rom 5:4).

(4) It engenders *love*: “I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice” (Ps 116:1).

(5) It engenders *the fear of God*. If by way of experience we have accumulated examples of the judgments God has sent upon such sins, we shall learn to refrain ourselves from such sins by way of the fear of God. To that end the apostle holds forth the sins and plagues of Israel in the desert, saying, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things” (1 Cor 10:6).

(6) It engenders *zeal in prayer*. By remembering previous answers to prayer, we shall approach the Lord with more freedom and plead with an increased faith that our prayer will be answered. We would not be able to do so unless we had taken note of previous answers and remembered them (cf. Ps 85:6-7). There, the psalmist holds before the Lord various blessings which have previously been bestowed upon him, and upon them he pleads: “Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee” (Ps 85:6).

(7) Yes, experience not only renders us fit to comfort ourselves, but also others. “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor 1:4). Therefore take careful note of all that transpires, remember everything, write it down, reflect upon it often, tell it to others, and make daily use of what you have previously experienced—to the benefit of yourself and others.

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## CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

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### Love for One's Neighbor

God is love, has love for humankind, and manifests this love in the natural realm to all men, as well as to His elect in the covenant of grace. God requires love in His law—His law being comprehended in the one word *love*. The objects of love are God and one's neighbor. For that purpose the law has been recorded upon two tables of stone. On the first is recorded how and in which way we are to manifest our love toward God, and on the second is recorded the manner how and in which way we are to manifest our love toward our neighbor. It is the latter we now wish to discuss.

*Love is the congenial frame of heart of God's children, wrought of God, whereby their heart is engaged with desires to have harmonious fellowship with their neighbor, and to seek their welfare as well as their own.*

Love is a *congenial frame of the heart*. Among all virtues, love is the most eminent, pure, and delightful; it is a disposition of the heart. The acts of thinking, speaking, and any other activities are not love itself—even though these actions may issue forth from love—for such actions can also take place apart from love. Rather, the very disposition of the heart is loving and it has a propensity toward love. It is thoroughly permeated with love, and it finds delight in being thus disposed. There can be motions in the heart of aversion, anger, and pity, which, even if they were not sinful, engender some measure of grief. However, love is radiant, sweet, and joyous in nature, and the stronger this propensity and the more powerful its manifestation, the greater its sweetness will be.

The *subject* or the seat of love is to be found *in the heart of the children of God*. After the fall, man in his natural state is “hateful, and hating” (Titus 3:3). He has the ability to love, for this is a human characteristic; however, he distorts it by focusing upon the

wrong object and by using it in a faulty manner. Man intensely loves himself, and he only loves that from which he can derive pleasure for himself. He hates and has an aversion for whatever is not subservient to this or is against him. An unconverted person is not a true lover of his neighbor; however, regeneration changes the heart of God's children and thereby they begin to love their neighbor in the right manner. Regeneration reforms man according to the image of God, and Christ is formed in them. Since God is love, someone who is a partaker of the divine nature consequently also has love—that is, according to the measure in which he is a partaker of the divine nature. The congregation of Colosse had love for all the saints (Col 1:4), and the congregation of the Thessalonians was “taught of God to love one another” (1 Thess 4:9). The heart is the essential seat of all virtues, and this is therefore also true for love. “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart” (1 Tim 1:5). Since the image of God resides in the heart, love likewise resides in the heart. It does not remain hidden there, however, for if the heart is aflame within, that flame will leap forth to the outside.

The *object* of this love is *one's neighbor*; that is, all who are of one blood and have come forth from one and the same Adam. We are to consider man as either presently having the image of God, or as man, or as a sinner in an unconverted state. Furthermore, we can distinguish between various relationships: parents, children, sisters and brothers, relatives, or strangers. They are all the objects of love. The exception here is when we note sinners as sinners; however, as human beings they continue to be the object of love in a general sense—not only to do good to them, but to love them, and thus to let our benevolence issue forth from that. Since there is such variety regarding types of neighbors, and the relationships to them, love will be expressed differently to the one than to the other.

### *The Essence of Love*

The very essence of love is that it is *relational* in nature. Man is a social being who desires to have fellowship and communion with his fellow man. In this respect we can view love as:

(1) *The singular desire* of having fellowship with a human being. A person would be more dead than alive if he were alone in the world or on an island—all hope being cut off of ever seeing or hearing a human being.

(2) *Affection*. There can be matters in another person's life which may or must rightfully prevent us from having familiar fellowship with him. Being hindered in doing so is grievous, however, and

one would desire that this hindrance be removed—be it that he would be converted, or that a given sin (being an impediment to spiritual communion and continually putting us in danger of being polluted) would not manifest itself so strongly in him. We shall, however, love him in spite of this, and the desire for fellowship remains. We shall make a wholehearted effort to do good to him in body and soul, and must rejoice when he prospers and grieve when it goes ill with him. It is thus that Paul loved Israel—presently unbelieving and striving against the truth—according to the flesh: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Rom 10:1). Thus, we must even love our enemies—those who are hostile and manifest enmity toward us (Matt 5:44).

(3) *Good will*; that is, if we are fully one with our neighbor in the mutual enjoyment of delight, pleasure, and happiness. God is the primary and preeminent object of love. Love toward all those in whom there is some resemblance of God flows forth out of this love for God. The greater this resemblance, the greater this love will be. In addition to this there is God’s command to love, which He gives us in order that we find our delight in this. Even though the angels resemble God to a higher degree than men of this earth do, they nevertheless do not qualify as our neighbors—and are thus not to be loved as such. Therefore, the love of *good will* flows both from the love to God and from a love for compliance with the commands of God. The one who loves will thus unite himself with this object with pleasure and delight: “Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1). This love not only manifests itself in esteem for the regenerate, but it also strives to be united with them. The nature of love is such that it establishes a union. Therefore the apostle calls love, “the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:14), and in Col 2:2 he says, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love.” It is thus written concerning the first church, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). Christ prays for this: “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (John 17:21). This love of *good will* only exists between believers, since they believe of each other that God loves them, and that they love God. This love is called brotherly love: “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb 13:1). This is not to suggest that the godly only manifest love to the godly, but the reasons for exercising the love of *good will* are only to be found in them. When the basis for such love is not to be found in others, the godly can also

not love them in this manner. Nevertheless, they love the unregenerate with the love of *affection*, seeking their welfare, doing to them all that love requires toward such an object, manifesting nevertheless in all their dealings the incompatibility and difference between them and the godly. The apostle does not want us to limit ourselves to love for the godly only, but our love must also extend to others. "... to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity"<sup>4</sup> (2 Pet 1:7). Wherever there is a loving heart, it will manifest itself toward every object in which something loveable is to be found, or toward those concerning whom God has obligated them in some measure.

### *The Origin of Love*

*God is the original cause of this love.* This divine spark is not kindled spontaneously in us, but is kindled by God in the heart. He is therefore called *the God of love* (2 Cor 13:11). The Holy Spirit authors love: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal 5:22). The Thessalonians were "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess 4:9). The Holy Spirit, regenerating the godly according to the image of God and making them to be partakers of the divine nature, creates in them a new nature which enables them to love. As soon as they, as regenerate, lift up their enlightened eyes, they—in the light of God's countenance—behold that He is altogether lovely. Their new loving nature will immediately exercise love toward the adorable God; they love Him, because He first loved them (1 John 4:19). The godly are not only cognizant of the Spirit within them, but also in others. They discern who they are who in some measure resemble God and love Him—and thus also who is or is not loved by God. Therefore their loving heart is attracted to such persons and expresses love toward them. The godly delight in such persons and desire to be intimately united with them. Their heart delights and rejoices in mutual fellowship. Furthermore, their new loving nature is attracted to all men whom they encounter, as they have been created in like manner as they were. It grieves the godly that such men are upon the way of destruction and in love they seek to guide them on the right way. They are sensitive to their bodily misery and will help them. They rejoice when all goes well with them, and they are friendly and kind toward everyone.

### *The Effects or Manifestation of Love*

The *effects* or manifestations of love are manifold and vary

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<sup>4</sup> The Statenvertaling reads: "... liefde jegens allen," that is, "charity toward all."

according to the nature of the object and our relationship to it. Together they constitute the duties which the second table of the law imposes upon us. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:8-10).

Concerning the manifestation of love we must note the following:

(1) The *motive* and the fountain from which it issues forth. This is the heart, as we have delineated before, and this love is therefore upright, heartfelt, and fervent. “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet 1:22).

(2) The *means whereby this love is executed*: in words, with the countenance, and in deeds. Love divorced from the heart is hypocrisy, and the heart without love is void of fruit. The countenance must be friendly: “Finally ... be courteous”<sup>5</sup> (1 Pet 3:8). Our words are not to be abrasive, but kind, wise, and pleasant: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6). Our deeds must be faithful and resolute: “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

(3) The *measure or extent* to which we are to love is the measure or extent to which man loves himself. As heartily, truthfully, readily, and faithfully as a man must rightfully love himself, so he must also love his neighbor. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (James 2:8).

(4) The specific *deeds* whereby this love is executed either pertain to the soul or the body. *As far as the soul is concerned*, we are to pray for each other (Rom 10:1), instruct each other in the way of salvation (Acts 18:26), rebuke and exhort each other (Heb 3:13), warn against, not suffer sin in each other (Lev 19:17), and comfort each other (1 Thess 5:14). *As far as the body is concerned*, we are to feed the hungry, give drink to those who are athirst, clothe the naked, visit the sick, give lodging to the stranger, help someone in whatever perplexity he may be, and support him by counsel and in deed (Matt 25:35-36). That is the *labor of love* referred to in (1 Thess 1:3).

### *This Love Inherent in Adam's Nature*

The human nature of Adam was created with love for the

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<sup>5</sup> The Statenvertaling reads: “Zijt ... vriendelijk,” that is, “Be friendly.”

neighbor; and after the fall God has by renewal commanded His people to love their neighbor. He did so in the law declared from Mount Sinai, its second table being: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt 22:39). This has also been enjoined by the prophets and the apostles (Lev 19:18,34; Deut 10:19). Impress this upon your heart—not only as being your obligation, but also to motivate you to engage in your duty: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another” (John 13:34). It is the Lord Jesus Himself, having exemplified love for us, who commands us to do so. Therefore we must very much take this to heart. “I give (it) unto you”; “This is My commandment, that ye love one another” (John 15:17); “These things I command you” (John 15:17); “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Rom 12:10); “Honour all men” (1 Pet 2:17); “Love as brethren” (1 Pet 3:8); “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11).

### *Proofs of its Absence*

Not only can everyone be convinced from the foregoing as to what his duty is, but he can discern as in a mirror how far he falls short in love, or how closely he resembles this standard. We have shown before that all love toward our neighbor has its origin in love to God in Christ Jesus, and therefore only those who are born of God, who by faith are united to God in Christ and love God as their reconciled Father, will rightly love their neighbor. Furthermore, such will have as their primary and foremost object of love those who are born of God, are partakers of the divine nature, are loved of God, and who love God. We have shown that by reason of this disposition they extend their love to all who are of the same human origin—even though they do not have the image of God and consequently cannot be loved with the love of *good will* and with union of heart. They will nevertheless love them with the love of *affection*, being desirous to do good to them and to protect them against harm, while maintaining a distance due to the difference of their natures.

Examine yourself in light of this, and observe whether you will pass the test. It is certain that the following do not have love:

(1) They who do not love God. Such is the condition of all the unconverted, whose nature has been exposed in chapter 14. If we do not love God, it is impossible to love those who bear resemblance to God, as they have something of God within them. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments” (1 John 5:2). The reverse argument is that he who does not love God also does not love His children.

(2) They who love the godly for the wrong reasons and with a wrong perspective. It does indeed occur that the unconverted love the godly, but this is not prompted by the fact that the godly are loved by God, love God and Jesus, and bear the image of God. Rather, the unconverted love them either because they were raised together, have compatible natural temperaments, are to some extent desirable and pleasant due to natural virtues, yield them advantage and temporal benefits, are faithful and upright in their services and dealings, by loving them receive love, honor, and esteem. All of this is agreeable with the state of nature. If, however, the godly let their light shine and thereby rebuke and put the unconverted to shame, and if by virtue of the image of God, the godly are more excellent than they are, the contrast between their natures will readily manifest itself. This in turn will engender inner resistance, secret aversion, the avoidance of their company, and hatred and opposition. Such ought thereby to be convinced that they in reality do not love the godly.

(3) They who make no distinction between those who are godly, civil, or ungodly, having no love for either the one or the other (yes, many do not even have love), live by themselves and for themselves; seek their own honor, advantage, and delight; do not care about others; have a heart that is strange toward everyone, and thus are without natural love. They only have love for themselves and for those who, in subservience to their self-love, are of advantage to themselves.

(4) They who love the world—that is, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—and all who are of one mind with them. In their eyes the godly are a despised lot. Instead, they honor those who serve the world, are their drinking companions, and entertain themselves with vanity, foolishness, vain conversation, gambling, carousing, fornication, dancing, boasting, etc. Such are the people to whom they join themselves and whose company they enjoy. Since such love the world, it is a certainty that they do not love the godly, but rather hate them. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

(5) They who do not only hate the godly in their heart, but inflict upon them all that issues forth from hatred. They despise them, speak about them with contempt, sneer at them, avoid their company, slander them, seek to trap them, oppress and persecute them, and they delight themselves if the godly are in adversity or meet with an accident—finding delight in this as if they had conquered an enemy.

All such, if they give but attention to these matters and examine

themselves in this light—that is, those having natural virtue, as well as worldly ones and hypocrites—will be convinced hereby that they have no love for the godly, and thus have no true love for others.

### *Consequences of Being Void of True Love*

Many will not be concerned about this and will say, “It is true. I neither love them, desire to love them, nor wish to be loved by them. What is that to you? Who is affected by it?” My answer is that it indeed affects you.

(1) You are not born of God: “He that loveth not knoweth not God” (1 John 4:8). If you say, “I do indeed love God,” then John says that you are lying: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen” (1 John 4:20). And, if you do not love God, you are accursed.

(2) You are not a Christian, have no part in His suffering, and are without Christ. Thus there are no promises for you—you are without God and without hope (Eph 2:12). If you reply, “I am truly a Christian, for I am baptized, I attend the Lord’s Supper, and I live as a Christian,” then I reply in turn, “You are lying and you are deceiving yourself, for if you were a Christian, you would love those whom Christ loves and those who love Christ.” For this is an unmistakable characteristic of the Christian: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). If you are without love, you are not a disciple.

(3) All your deeds, however wonderful they may appear to be, are of no value, for they are void of love. If you loved God, you would also love His children. Then you would have the Spirit, possess spiritual life, have a heavenly nature, and everything about you would be of an entirely different nature. Since you are void of love, however, everything is dead and your works are but dead works which cannot please God. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ... I am nothing ... it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:1-3). Observe that everything is contingent upon love, and that you who are without love are destitute of everything. All that you do is sin, aggravates your judgment, and is a powerful confirmation that you will eternally go lost if you were to die in that condition. Therefore be convinced of your wretched condition—both present and future—and let that be a means to engender concern, and to cause you to flee to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness.

### *The Deficient Love of the Godly and Its Causes*

To observe that natural men are without love is not quite as

grievous as having to make the most disturbing observation that even the godly are so deficient in love in light of what the apostle says concerning love in 1 Cor 13.

Furthermore, if one considers the conduct of many of the truly regenerate, how much they fall short of this standard! It is true: They love the godly because God loves them and because they love God in Christ. Their heart is knit to them in that respect—with the exclusion of all other men. They esteem them, their heart goes out toward them, they rejoice when they perceive the godly in their essential nature; but when it comes to their deeds, it is manifest how weak their love is. They keep to themselves and it is as if all others were strangers to them, or they exercise fellowship with only one or with but a few, and ignore others. If one of the godly has a fault, they will immediately render his godliness suspect. If he is perceived as a challenge to us and he does not act according to our wishes, then displeasure, wrath, strife, and backbiting surface, and one gives him the cold shoulder—acting as if their spiritual life did not proceed from one and the same Spirit. And in regard to the unconverted, where is the heartfelt affection for them? Where is the joy about their prosperity, the grief over their mishaps, and the exercise concerning their spiritual and physical welfare?

It ought indeed to be investigated why it is that there is so little love among the godly, so that everyone would be motivated to remove the causes of his lovelessness which he perceives within himself, and thus enhance his progress in the exercise of love. Lovelessness is caused by:

(1) A lack of communion with God. God is love, and having communion with God will cause us to grow warm in love. We shall then manifest more of the nature of God, and having more love within, this love will manifest itself that much more strongly externally. If your heart accuses you of lovelessness, then immediately turn to the cause, and consider that it is the result of having wandered so far away from God—for love must proceed from that fountain.

(2) Having but little assurance concerning our state, and a failure to take note of and acknowledge the state of grace. We are then weak in faith, yield to deadness and listlessness, and do not live tenderly. Instead, sin gains the upper hand, and we do not dare to place ourselves among God's children. Therefore, even though we esteem others as gracious souls, we neither have courage to be in their company, mutually rejoice with them, nor find delight in their fellowship.

(3) Having succumbed very much to a slumber brought on by the world and its lusts. Since their love manifests itself strongly in

that direction, there is consequently a lesser degree of love for the godly and others. And the little love that is there will readily be subdued if one or the other person is hindered in attaining his earthly desires.

(4) The knowledge that most professors of the truth are unconverted, and a being disillusioned by some whom they thought to have been converted, who showed subsequently that such was not the case. They act as if it were a sin to love someone as a godly person who but appeared to be so and in reality was not—as if we should love none other than those who are godly. The truth is that it is a much greater virtue to love such with a brotherly love as long as there is the least probability that such is warranted, and to have a strong love of affection when that probability has disappeared.

(5) The godly going too much in hiding and not letting their light shine forth. Thus, people either do not know them, or they observe but little of the grace of which they have a greater measure within. There is but little manifestation of mutual love, and thus the love and grace of the one believer does not ignite the other.

(6) The godly sinning publicly, but not manifesting their sorrow which they have in secret. If they would only show their sorrow, love would increase in strength rather than be impeded.

(7) An excessive manifestation of self-love, there being a desire to be loved in return, or an insistence that others love us first; instead, we must take the initiative and love without being loved in return.

### *Benefits Emanating from the Exercise of Love*

It ought to grieve you in the innermost recesses of your soul that you have so little love—of which you manifest even less. It displeases God, deprives you and the congregation of a blessing, causes the godly and godliness to be slandered, obstructs the conversion of many, and offends those beginners in grace whose heart is filled with love. Furthermore, it is the cause of the decline of the church.

Therefore, strive that your love would increase and become more fervent, and allow my exhortation to revive you in this respect.

First, all your relationships strongly obligate you to exercise brotherly love; and believers, when reflecting upon that relationship, are stirred up to love fervently. To that end consider:

(1) God is your Father and the Father of all believers; He loves you and He loves them. Should this then not stir us up to love one another (1 John 4:11)?

(2) The Lord Jesus, who is not ashamed to call you and them brothers, loves both you and them. Therefore, “walk in love, as Christ

also hath loved us” (Eph 5:2). Together you are the temples of one and the same Spirit who dwells in all of you, by whom all of you live, and who works love (Gal 5:22). Therefore we pray “for the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30), that you do not obstruct His motions toward love; rather, yield to them and you will abound in love.

(3) Are you not partakers of the same sacraments? “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13); “For we being many are one bread, and one body” (1 Cor 10:17); “These are ... feasts of charity” (Jude 12). Therefore, should not this intimate relationship stir you up to love? Since then we are brothers, are together God’s children, out of love have been delivered by the Lord Jesus, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and are united by the sacraments, let us therefore love one another fervently with brotherly love.

Secondly, God takes a special delight in the mutual love of His children for each other. This is a delight for natural parents; thus, our heavenly Father is also pleased with the mutual love of His children. Jesus rejoices in it and the angels delight in it. The Father and Christ make their abode with such and bless them: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps 133:1,3).

Thirdly, the exercise of brotherly love is most beneficial.

(1) It adds much luster to the church; all who are without will recognize her by this. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). It begets much esteem and respect for the congregation. When the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, then “durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them” (Acts 5:13).

(2) As one candle lights the other, likewise the love of one will ignite love in the other, and everyone will thus be enlivened. As it is a delight to see a large church filled with shining lights, it is far more delightful to observe a congregation which is filled with those who love. Yes, it would be a means whereby many would be drawn to the church, the unconverted would be converted, beginners in the faith would readily grow, and backsliders would be restored.

(3) The one who loves experiences a special joy. It is a greater delight to love than to be loved. Joy is his strength; he avoids many snares, is delivered from much strife which otherwise would easily weaken his faith, and proceeds with courage.

(4) Love to the brethren assures the one who loves that he is in a state of grace, for his love for a given person proceeds from

something of God being in him; since God loves him, he loves God even more—and he who loves God is known of God (1 Cor 8:3).

Once more, since this love is expressed toward those who are of like persuasion, love seeks union due to this commonality. Since such a person's love issues forth to one who is like himself, and he seeks union with those who love God and are loved by God, he himself is in that state, for otherwise he would not seek fellowship on such a foundation. He is thus at the same time assured that he loves God—something about which he is frequently concerned. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

Fourthly, mutual love serves the purpose of mutual refreshment. Animals of the same species frequently walk together and citizens of the same nation stay together when they are in a strange country. Worldly people refresh themselves by mutual love; should the godly then not do likewise? In the world they will find neither help nor comfort, for it hates them. They also do not seek it there, for they hate it. What now? Will they each live alone in the world? No, it is due to the goodness of God that they are able to have a more heartfelt love, and a more intimate and steadfast friendship with each other, than that which is to be found in the world. This mutual love refreshes them so much that they can readily do without all other love. This love yields to them mutual help, support, comfort, encouragement, compassion, and whatever else they could expect from people.

#### *Guidelines for the Proper Exercise of Love*

It almost seems to me that I have done needless work in stirring you up by way of various arguments to love—as if light needed a recommendation, or that fire is rendered more pleasant by way of rational argument. The mere mention of love is enough to stir you up. Begin to undertake this task and it will become all the more sweet to you.

(1) Let the initiative to love come from you and do not wait for another person to make the first move. Even if you are the very least among the godly, the love of children is sweet and even kindles the love of adults.

(2) Do not seek to receive love in return; however, if you receive it, do not let it end in yourself. Rather, thank the Lord for the refreshment and the quickening you enjoy as a result of this. If you do not receive love in return, let it neither trouble nor hinder you, for you are not worthy of being loved. Let it be sufficient to you that you are permitted and able to love.

(3) Let there be high esteem for the grace which is or appears to be in another person. Be not suspicious, but be quick to accept it as being genuine. Grace can be very feeble in someone, and it will not harm you to love someone as a godly person who is unconverted. Is it not your desire and obligation to love others?

(4) The offenses and falls of others must not impede you in your love, for even great grace can coexist with great corruption—how much more this is true when grace is feeble. You do not know how much strife another has concerning these faults, how much he grieves over them in secret, and with how many tears and prayers he seeks forgiveness.

(5) Show much love in your countenance, words, and entire conduct—even if the heart is somewhat lukewarm. It is not hypocritical when we externally manifest and conduct ourselves as we ought to be while striving to involve our heart in this as well, even though we cannot do as we desire. While thus engaged, our heart will become more and more involved. However, to wish to create an appearance, while being differently disposed in the heart, is hypocrisy. Showing love will cause the heart to increase in love.

(6) Permit that light and grace which is in you, be it ever so feeble, to shine forth. Manifest it, and conduct yourself as such, doing so not for your sake by seeking honor, but because God commands you to do so, and in order that others might have the opportunity to exercise the virtue of love.

(7) Be much in prayer to the Lord, for love proceeds from Him. Of yourself and in your own strength, you will neither attain to nor increase this love. If you are thus engaged, the Lord will grant you more grace and cause you to grow, until He will take you into the perfect love of eternal glory.



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CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

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Humility

Love for our neighbor is the fountain of all those virtues we are to exercise toward him, but it is humility that adorns these virtues. However excellent the performance of a virtue may be, if there is pride in the person who performs this duty, such performance will reek and be entirely without luster. Therefore, a believer who in the way of holiness wishes to live to the glory of God and render the church honorable must strive to be humble.

*Humility is the humble disposition of the heart of the believer—both in a personal sense and toward his neighbor. It consists in having a correct judgment concerning himself whereby he neither elevates himself above his condition, nor wishes to be elevated by others as such.*

*The Adornment of a Believer*

True humility is only to be found in a Christian, that is, *in a believer*. All humility of the unconverted is nothing but an appearance without substance, and upon close examination it will prove to be either nothing but pride or else despondency—the reason being that an unconverted person has neither life, spiritual disposition of heart, nor is he united to Christ from whom, as the Head, all virtues issue forth to His children. However, a regenerate person has the principle of life in Christ and thus also a virtuous heart—the fountain of virtues. “Let the brother of low degree<sup>6</sup> rejoice” (James 1:9). It is the Lord who teaches humility and Christ is the example: “Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart”

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<sup>6</sup> The Statenvertaling reads: “... de broeder die nederig is,” that is, “... the brother who is humble.”

(Matt 11:29). Therefore, those who have fellowship with the Lord Jesus, know Him and behold Him, and in faith are united with Him, will learn this from Him and their humility is of the same nature as His.

The heart is the seat of their humility. The seat of humility is not to be found in our face, talk, or dress, but in the heart. It is also not solely and essentially to be found in the intellect, even though the intellect is functional in the exercise of humility in knowing the nature and beauty of this virtue and presenting it to the will as such. Instead, the essential function of humility is in the will which embraces, loves, and delights itself in this virtue. We are to be like Jesus, that is, “lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29).

Humility is a disposition of the heart. The beauty of this virtue is not something which is paraded and put on display to be approved of as such. It also does not consist in having the intention to be humble—a condition which may exist temporarily, but soon dissipates. Rather, humility is a propensity or a predisposition. The regenerate heart has a nature which is thoroughly humble—this humility being of an enduring nature. Whenever such a person engages himself, he does so in harmony with this heart and nature. All that he does has the fragrance of and is permeated with humility. The measure in which this disposition is pervasive and steadfast is commensurate with the measure of a person’s exercise to be in such a disposition. This propensity, initially having been infused by God, is fortified through much exercise.

### *The Object and Essence of Humility*

*The object of humility is man himself and his neighbor.*

(1) *It is man himself*, for due to self-knowledge he knows that there is neither excellence nor anything desirable to be found in him. In his own eyes he is a great *nothing*, and he views himself as such. He thus sinks away in his own nothingness as a stone cast into the water, not resting until it reaches the bottom; that is its proper position and there it will come to rest. It is likewise true that the lowest place will be the place of the humble man; there he finds rest and is in his element as a fish in water. He is able to accept the fact that others receive honor and love, enjoy themselves, and are prosperous, as long as he may be humble in himself, and in that way of humility can engage in his duty by the grace and power God affords him. He is able to end in humility when he has done something, and with that humility he can suffer and endure that which the Lord causes to come his way, either without or by the instrumentality of men—it is all well with him.

(2) The humble person also exercises his humility toward *his neighbor*. He acknowledges it to be the will of God that he love his neighbor, and this motivates him to do so. He perceives in his neighbor that which is eminent and desirable; he highly esteems this, honors him as such, wholeheartedly submits himself to him in that respect, and with this disposition he does for his neighbor what God commands him to do. In comparing himself to his neighbor, he appears in his own eyes as copper compared to gold, and as lead compared to silver. Being in such a frame, he honors, loves, and renders him service. “Be not highminded” (Rom 11:20); “For I say ... to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3); “My brethren, be not many masters” (James 3:1); “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil 2:3).

The *essence* of humility consists in *lowliness of heart*. *Pride* lifts up the heart and puffs it up with vain air, and a proud person in his own conceit wishes to be honored above others. This motivates him in all that he does and is the objective of his actions. If he achieves his objective, he is delighted; but if not, he becomes peevish and wrathful. Humility, on the contrary, brings the heart low and renders it humble. Thus, the humble person will not have himself in view in his actions, and upon having performed his duty he returns to himself, humbly and quietly remaining in that place, regardless of what the outcome of his performance has been.

The other extreme in relation to humility is *despondency*. This comes about when we lose all courage, give up, and thus collapse as a wet rag. This is not humility; rather it is pride, for despondency comes about when we can neither achieve our objective nor perceive any way whereby to achieve it. Humility is positioned between these two vices (pride and despondency). Relative to the one, humility is a lowly and unassuming disposition, causing one to remain in the background. Humility needs but little room for herself. In that setting she is at home and does not move beyond its boundaries. Relative to despondency, humility is armed with courage and *spiritual valor*. The humble person engages himself as such in dependence upon the grace and power of God, doing so in his appointed station and with the gifts he has received. To be seen of men and to seek after honor and love are foreign to the humble soul. He will leave that for those who desire it. He will be satisfied with having done his duty, and if this renders him honor and love (without this being his goal), this will not lift him up. If it brings him shame and injury, he does not become despondent and discouraged. He will remain in his place, and there he will be

humble and quiet, courageously proceeding with his duty. David gives expression to this disposition: “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child” (Ps 131:1-2). A humble person has a childlike disposition.

### *Humility Proceeds from God*

God is *the moving cause* of humility. By nature man is a creature who aspires after glory, is proud and conceited, and has high thoughts of himself. He is motivated by self, is focused on self, and is desirous that everyone’s end would be to esteem, honor, fear, serve, and obey him. The heart the Lord gives to His people is different, however, for He causes Christ to be formed in them, so that, also in humility, they resemble Christ. The Lord grants them enlightened eyes of understanding by which they know themselves, are able to judge themselves rightly, know what their gifts are, and of what they are worthy. Furthermore, they have a love for righteousness and thus they neither desire nor seek that to which they are not entitled.

Thus humility issues forth from *a right judgment of one’s self*. The humble acknowledge that they are made of dust and reside in tabernacles of clay. They know that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God; are blind, miserable, naked, and wretched, and that they are thus abominable, hateful, and intolerable before God, angels, and men. They know they are not worthy that the heavens cover them, the sun shines upon them, or that they walk upon the earth, enjoying the fellowship of men, having a piece of bread to eat, and having clothing for their body. Rather, they are worthy of having been cast into hell long ago. Such is their judgment of themselves, and they acquiesce in this—even though it condemns them. They thus perceive how wrong it would be for them to elevate themselves, pretending that they are worthy of something. When they compare themselves with others, they perceive themselves as being foolish, void of understanding, having a disgraceful and difficult character, and their actions as being worthy of scorn. It is thus that others would know them if they knew them as well internally as they know them externally. How should they then have any high thoughts of themselves? They deem that others would be in error if they thought anything of them or wished to render them some honor. They acknowledge that the good found in them—which they are cognizant of and highly

esteem—has been given to them by another, namely God. Since this continues to be of God, they would be guilty of the greatest foolishness if they were to covet honor, love, or esteem for something which has been loaned to them. (A beggar would invite scorn if he were to boast of an expensive garment which someone had loaned him for one day.) Yes, even if the humble person were perfect in all things, he would know that all esteem, honor, love, fear, and obedience would be due unto God. He would know that God has forbidden him to covet, strive for, and permit these matters to be attributed to him. He therefore judges it to be an act of thievery and unrighteousness to seek for this and to boast of it. This causes him to be small in his own eyes, and he is, remains, and engages himself in harmony with this disposition.

### *The Effects of Humility*

The effects of humility are twofold: The humble person neither elevates himself above what his condition is, nor does he want to be elevated above such by someone else.

First, *a humble person does not elevate himself above what his condition is*. God has made a distinction between people—both in the spiritual as well as the natural realm. If the Lord has truly made someone to be a Christian; if He has granted him His Spirit and His grace; and if He has bestowed on him life, light, a principle of holiness, as well as gifts to be used to the benefit of others, then such a person does not deny this, but acknowledges it. For, to deny this would be an act of pride rather than of humility, acting as if we did not receive it, whereas in truth we did. Furthermore, it would be an intolerable act of ingratitude. Thus such a person does indeed acknowledge the grace he possesses, but he does not boasts of it nor does he wish to be honored by men for it.

Also in the natural realm God has placed people in different stations, for there are government officials, citizens, parents, children, servants, the rich, middle class citizens, and the poor. The humble person will maintain and continue in the station where God has placed him, until God calls him away from it. If he is in a lowly station, he is satisfied, it being the will of God. He possesses more than he is worthy of, and does not walk away from it, but will remain with it until the Lord removes it from him; that is, if it were to please Him to do so. If such is not the case, it is also well with him. If he holds a high position which is accompanied by wealth, he will also maintain it, and seek to be faithful therein. He does not exalt himself above others because he holds this position. Rather, he is humble, knowing that he is not worthy of it. Instead, he has

come to see it as his duty to perform that function, thereby rendering honorable that office or position he holds. The denigration of one's self is not an act of humility. It is much easier to cast everything away and to subject ourselves to poverty, shame, contempt, solitude, and silence, than to preserve our position with a humble heart, and to conduct ourselves in a manner which is consistent with our position. Thus, someone can simultaneously have a high position, be rich, esteemed, and honored, and yet have a humble disposition of heart. He does not covet honor, respect, and obedience because he has this position, nor does he boast of it. He nevertheless agrees to be treated as such, solely because it is God's command.

Secondly, *neither will he desire to be elevated by others above the condition in which he is*. This would give neither pleasure nor joy, but rather sorrow and grief, knowing that he is not entitled to it. He wishes to be humbled and remain unnoticed as he passes through this world. He only desires to give rather than to receive. He lets the Hamans have the knee-bends and the Herods the praises. He is happy when he can be on his own, and if someone wishes to esteem him too highly, he will convey his aversion for this, saying with John the Baptist, "I am not (he)" (John 1:21). With Peter and Paul, he will abhor any excessive honor (cf. Acts 3:12; Acts 10:26; Acts 14:14). Instead, the humble person highly esteems the good he perceives in another person. He esteems that person more excellent than he is, humbles himself in his presence, is willing to be of service to him, and is not envious if this person is honored above him, but rather rejoices in this.

### *The Proud Rebuked*

The depiction of humility in its nature and circumstances will give you light in the matter, so that you can examine yourself and be convinced as to whether you possess this virtue of humility or not. There are but few humble persons—yes, humility is presently despised and made out to be dullness, melancholy, evil-temperedness, and slavishness. Nevertheless, this is the disposition with which God is pleased—the contrary of which He hates. Take note of this:

(1) You who are proud of heart and have a haughty spirit, who have great thoughts of yourself due to your ancestry, wealth, the offices you hold, wisdom, beauty, strength, artistic talent, gifts, and all that of which a fool will boast; you who elevate yourself above your neighbor, viewing him with contempt and having the notion that he must honor and revere, bow, and yield to you; you who love to be greeted in a humble and reverent manner, to be praised and elevated above others; you who are envious when another person

is elevated and honored above you, and readily cherish hatred and vengefulness against those who either do not honor you sufficiently or who despise you.

(2) You who deal haughtily with your inferiors and puff yourself up in their presence as a cropper pigeon; who raise your eyebrows, hold your head in the air, imitate a proud gait, put your hand on your side, and thus present yourself as a big bag of air, wishing that one would cry out, “Bow the knee”; or at least that everyone would yield to you, and while standing aside, would greet you in a most respectable manner.

(3) You who involve yourself in everything and speak about yourself and your accomplishments so that others may know what manner of man or woman you are.

(4) You who seek to increase your glory by boasting, decorating your house as a palace (each according to his ability) and then gloat by yourself, thinking, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built ... for the honour of my majesty” (Dan 4:30), having the objective that others would esteem you as great, rich, and prominent. Furthermore, such will presently make themselves up as a decorated doll, and will go in public as a *Bernice* with great splendor (Acts 25:23; in Greek: φαντασιν/α [*phantasia*]). The entire purpose is to gain honor and glory. They avoid the company of those who are of lesser status, for this would humiliate them, but they will join themselves to those of higher social status, even if one were to make a fool of himself there.

(5) You who speak of certain persons—if they are prominent people—as being your cousins, even though the relationship goes all the way back to Noah, but refrain yourself from saying, “My cousin the shoemaker, my cousin the maid,” for this would not promote your own status. And thus we could go on: Whatever one does and says all proceeds from pride and is for the purpose of self-elevation.

What a fool you are, however! First of all, since you are in reality so despicable, what will it profit you if people esteem you? Since there is in reality nothing honorable in you, what will it profit you if insignificant men honor you?

Secondly, your pride will readily be detected and you will be a stench to all who observe and notice this. People will have an aversion for you, ridicule you, consider you to be a fool, will avoid your company, and if you are in the presence of upright people who will give you some attention and get you to talk, your proud foolishness will manifest itself and you will make a mockery of yourself.

Thirdly, the godly (who are the honorable of the world) abhor

you and do not wish to be in your company: “Him that hath an high look and a proud heart shall not I suffer” (Ps 101:5).

Fourthly, above all take note of how God esteems you and what He will do to you.

(1) God hates you. What will it therefore benefit you if you please yourself? Consider with dread what God says concerning you: “The Lord GOD hath sworn by Himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces” (Amos 6:8); “These six things doth the Lord hate” (Prov 6:16-17), and a proud look is mentioned first; “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord” (Prov 16:5).

(2) Not only is God’s heart opposed to the proud, but also His mouth; He reproves and curses them: “Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed” (Ps 119:21).

(3) God’s hand is against them: “God resisteth the proud” (1 Pet 5:5); “Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I shall visit thee” (Jer 50:31). And if you wish to know what the outcome and your end will be, read Mal 4:1: “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” It was pride which caused Sodom to be consumed with fire from heaven (Ezek 16:49); Dathan, Abiram, and Korah to sink into the earth (Num 16:12-33); and Herod to be slain by an angel and be consumed alive by worms (Acts 12:21,23). Behold, such will be the end of the proud.

### *The Godly Exhorted*

You who are godly, upon examining yourself, you will perceive from the foregoing not only your deficient humility, but also how much pride yet remains in you. Humble yourself about this, be ashamed, and strive to increase in humility.

If pride is such a dreadful sin, and if such dreadful plagues are its consequences, then you who are godly ought to see to it that this sin does not cleave to you; rather, endeavor with your entire heart to be humble within and without, for:

First, you have nothing of yourself whereof you can be proud; instead, whatever can render you despicable is to be found in you. Your body is nothing but dust, stench, and pollution; your soul is bereft of the image of God, is a pool of all manner of impure monstrosities, and if another person would know all your thoughts and could observe and be aware of all the sins you have committed

in secret, would you then dare to look him in the eye if he were to look at you? You are indeed foolish, have a difficult and disgraceful character, and others excel in areas which are not to be found in you. You know this very well, for the Lord has given you light. If you thus examine yourself, how can you yet have a lofty thought about yourself or have any desire to be esteemed as a prominent person? You are convinced that you desire something unbecoming and wrongful, and that you would require something from others which is but deceit. Can you be deceived with lies? The graces, gifts, beauty, strength, riches, and whatever else you may have, God has but granted you on loan. Would you then put these on display as if they were your own? Therefore, consider yourself, and judge aright; you will then be small and insignificant in your eyes and not seek great things.

Secondly, take note of God's command; God forbids you to be proud and commands you to be humble. Consider texts previously quoted, and add the following passages to them: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (Rom 12:16); "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness" (Eph 4:1-2); "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but ... to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic 6:8). Does the command of God, and that which your Father enjoins you to do, carry no weight with you? Should these not thoroughly permeate your soul? You have said so many times, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth; Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Well, God answers you that you are to be humble. Therefore, take this to heart and be humble.

Thirdly, your name as well as your relationship to the Lord Jesus obligates you to humility. You are named "Christian" after the name of Christ. Your relationship to Him is that you are His bride upon whom He has set His love. The Lord Jesus was humble—the perfect example of humility. Love ought to motivate us to be conformed to Him—more so because He establishes Himself as an example and commands us to follow Him in this: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). By nature we are intolerably proud—we who are most despicable. A Christian cannot be a Christian if he does not become humble. In order that we might become humble we need to learn how; this requires effort in order that we may all the better make progress in this. He gives us an example—yes, He himself becomes our example. Therefore conduct yourself as such and be as He is; be humble.

Fourthly, humility is a most eminent ornament. Virgins love jewelry, and a bride will adorn herself to please her husband. However, you are spiritual virgins—the bride of the Lord Jesus. I may thus

address you as such: “Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem” (Isa 52:1). However, what is your ornament?—humility. Humility is the most beautiful ornament, and renders you pleasant before God and men. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of ... humbleness” (Col 3:12); “Be clothed with humility” (1 Pet 5:5); “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa 57:15); “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly” (Ps 138:6). A humble person is pleasing to all manner of people. One proud person cannot tolerate the other one; however, since a humble person submits himself, a worldly person will enjoy having fellowship with a humble person. And as a godly person loves Jesus, he will also love those who resemble Jesus; since humility excels in the Lord Jesus, he thus especially delights in the humble.

Fifthly, humility is most advantageous.

(1) God thinks upon such with delight and desires to help them: “Who remembered us in our low estate” (Ps 136:23).

(2) God causes them to rejoice: “I ... revive the spirit of the humble” (Isa 57:15).

(3) God’s spiritual benefits are for such: “God ... giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5).

(4) God keeps them: “He shall save the humble person” (Job 22:29).

(5) It yields all manner of temporal benefits to such: “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” (Prov 22:4); “Before honour is humility” (Prov 15:33); “Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Prov 29:23).

(6) God comforts the humble: “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down ...” (2 Cor 7:6).

(7) God exalts the humble: “He ... exalted them of low degree” (Luke 1:52).

(8) The humble person enjoys a sweet peace and has inner delight: “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” (James 1:9).

(9) A humble man is a wise man: “With the lowly is wisdom” (Prov 11:2).

(10) A humble person is valiant, for he neither seeks honor nor fears shame. Furthermore, everything suits him; he is willing to say and do it, and all that he does is pleasing to him. Therefore endeavor with much earnestness to be humble of heart.

### *Means to Learn Humility*

Therefore, if you desire to be humble, it is needful for you to learn this. It does not issue forth spontaneously, and love for this

virtue will also not engender it unless an effort be made in this respect and one makes use of the means which are fit for this. There are three books from which we may learn humility.

First of all there is the *book of sin*. Examine yourself continually in the light of your falling into sin. If you take note of your falling into sin, your goal being the humbling of yourself, you will learn experientially that you are polluted, impure, wicked, atheistic, and abominable in your heart, which time and again brings forth like deeds. You thus have no reason for complaints when God brings affliction upon you, nor when men despise you, for you know yourself to be ten times more despicable than they deem you to be. You are thus neither worthy of being the recipient of the least mercy of God nor of the least favor of men. It is thus that David learned to be humble—as is to be observed in Ps 51. It will also render you humble.

Secondly, there is the *book of crosses*. However bitter and distasteful the cross may be, it nevertheless teaches humility if we take but proper notice of it. From it we shall learn how disagreeable, unbelieving, and impatient we are, all of which are fruits of pride. We are instructed thereby about the righteousness and sovereignty of God toward His creatures in punishing sin. It removes the pride of heart, makes it subdued and pliable—especially if it is a cross of long duration, and if we can neither avoid it nor find delight in other things. David therefore called “being chastised” *being oppressed*: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord ... that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Ps 119:71,75). Therefore, submit yourself to the rod and to Him who has appointed it, and you will become humble.

Thirdly, there is the *book of God’s benefits and blessings*. On the one hand they will humble us when we consider our ingratitude in failing to end with them in the Lord with a lively heart. They also teach us our inability to use them well, for we need strong legs to bear up under days of prosperity. The receipt of benefits renders some unhappy and they are happy when they may lose them. On the other hand, however, a believer will be deeply convinced of his unworthiness upon receiving special benefits. In humility of heart he will say with Jacob, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth” (Gen 32:10). When the Lord rejoiced the heart of David, he said, “And I will yet be more vile than thus” (2 Sam 6:22).



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 CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR
 

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## Meekness

*Humility begets meekness*, and it is the latter we now wish to discuss. We shall consider it in a comprehensive sense; that is, as far as it includes *longsuffering and tolerance*. In Hebrew it is the word  $\eta\omega\nu$  (‘*anawah*), which is a derivative from a word, which among other things, means: *to be humbled, to humble one’s self, to be submissive, and to be oppressed*. Other derivatives include *poor, oppressed, and wretched*. Thus, in the vernacular, meekness is expressive of a poor, humble disposition as far as the human use of this expression is concerned. In Greek we have the word  $\pi\rho\alpha\omicron\&\tau\eta\omega$  (*praotes*), which is a derivative of a word meaning “to transfer.” This refers to a person who readily establishes contact with others and with whom others easily make contact in turn. It can also refer to *presence of mind*. This is indicative of a person who always has his presence of mind and does not lose self-control as a result of anger. Our Dutch word, being a composite form of the words “tender” and “heart,” expresses this disposition very well. Thus, it refers to a heart that is tender in its dealings.

*Meekness is the believer’s even-tempered disposition of heart which issues forth from union with God in Christ, consisting in self-denial and love for his neighbor. This results in having fellowship with his neighbor in an agreeable, congenial, and loving manner; in relinquishing his rights; in enduring the violation of his rights without becoming angry, being forgiving, and in rewarding it with good.*

This virtue also *resides in the heart*. The *understanding*, having been enlightened, perceives the vanity and transitory nature of all that is to be found in the world—and that it is not worthy of our being disturbed about upon it being removed from us, nor of going to great lengths to attain it. The enlightened understanding

is acquainted with the evil of human nature, its readiness to yield to wrath, and the readiness of the natural man to do injury to his neighbor either by words or deeds. The enlightened understanding perceives that irritableness and anger are foolish sentiments which neither yield restoration nor prevent harm. Instead, they aggravate the matter and will inflict more damage. It thus deems it best to endure all things and remain silent. Meekness is therefore wisdom. “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

The will loves this virtue, embraces it, and by way of exercise is increasingly able to control and govern the affections, in order that they do not become too violent and too disorderly. To be tender in countenance and words can frequently be nothing more than hypocrisy. The very term “meekness” implies that the heart must be tender. If the soul is in such a frame, then whatever issues forth from this fountain will cause the entire disposition of a person—as well as his countenance and words—to be unpretentious and tender. “... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit” (1 Pet 3:4).

### *The Subject and Object of Meekness*

Let us consider the *subject* of this virtue. Meekness is a virtue which is to be found in believers only. A natural man may have something which resembles meekness. It may be that someone has a lethargic and lazy disposition, is bereft of wisdom, and is not aware what is either to his advantage or disadvantage. It may be that he is so poor and miserable that he is without hope and courage; being in despair, he simply endures everything. It may be that he has a tender disposition and thus gives little reason for disturbances. It may be that he is a wise and intelligent man in the natural sense of the word, and thus perceives the foolishness of anger and the suitableness of meekness, as well as the dishonor resulting from the one and the honor from the other. It may also be that he holds a prominent and distinguished position and does not concern himself with the one who is beneath him, since such a person cannot harm him. All this has the appearance of meekness, but is not meekness; at best it is but a natural meekness, which neither proceeds from the right fountain nor contains the true essence. Only a believer who is presently united with Christ, however, and is spiritually alive due to the influence of His Spirit, is capable of being truly meek. “Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1). They are contrasted

with the ungodly: “The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground” (Ps 147:6).

The *object* of this virtue is man’s neighbor, that is, every person. Meekness is also practiced toward God; it relates to His commandments being embraced with a compliant and willing soul. James speaks of this: “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). It also pertains to chastisements to which one quietly submits his soul without fretfulness. Aaron thus remained silent when his children were burned (Lev 10:3). When Eli received a grievous message, he said, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (1 Sam 3:18). However, our reference here is to meekness which is manifested toward people—regardless of whether they are good or evil, godly or ungodly, deal tenderly or harshly, or deal righteously or unrighteously with us. Velvet remains soft irrespective of whether it is handled roughly or gently, whether it is stroked by a soft hand or a hand which is rough and callous. This is also true for a meek person, since his disposition is not of an external nature, and is not dependent upon the manner in which he is treated. Rather, the soul has this disposition when she is not in the presence of any person as well as in the absence of the occurrence of any event. Thus, such a person will remain the same regardless of how the events he encounters may vary. “... Showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2).

### *The Essence of Meekness*

*The essence* of this virtue consists in having an even-tempered disposition of heart. Since all that satisfies man must come from an external source, he has a desire for, and is inclined toward, that which he believes will satisfy him. Since he does not have God in view at all (or only partially), he focuses either fully or partially upon that which is of the world. More particularly, he desires that toward which he is most inclined, or what most suits his abilities. Since people have desires toward the same thing, and thus are a hindrance to each other, the heart of those who are hindered in achieving their objective will be stirred up and tossed to and fro by an inner turmoil—as if they were at sea during a storm. A meek person has chosen God to be his portion, however, and perceives all that is in the world to be vanity, and knows that no one will either speak or do anything except God wills it. Thus, as he trusts in God, his heart will be even-tempered and fixed. His heart is neither in turmoil nor restless, but is of an even-tempered, steadfast, and peaceful disposition. If someone assaults him in either

word or deed, he will be as an even shore upon which the tempestuous waves crash and then trickle away playfully. This disposition is expressed in the following passages: “His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord” (Ps 112:7); “Truly my soul waiteth upon God” (Ps 62:1); “He layeth up sound wisdom<sup>7</sup> for the righteous” (Prov 2:7).

This even-temperedness is accompanied by:

(1) *Flexibility*; a meek person is cooperative and will adjust himself to another person; that is, insofar as it is not contrary to God’s will. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another” (1 Pet 5:5).

(2) *Agreeableness*; the meek person stubbornly insists neither upon his own will nor upon his own judgment in temporal and neutral matters—as long as it is not contrary to God’s law. He will listen to the views of and comply with the will of others; he will readily permit himself to be persuaded to that end. “But the wisdom that is from above is ... peaceable” (James 3:17).

(3) *Loveliness*; the meek person is charming in his speech and actions. He is good-natured, a pleasure to deal with, and friendly, so that it is a delight to interact with him. “Whatsoever things are lovely ... think on these things” (Phil 4:8); “... be ... gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2); “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Phil 4:5); “Be courteous” (1 Pet 3:8).

### *The Moving Cause of Meekness*

God is the *moving cause of meekness*. Man is naturally inclined to lose his temper, be angry, rancorous, and as prickly as a thorn bush which one cannot touch without being injured by it. However, when God regenerates a man according to the image of the meek Jesus, He grants him a meek heart. The apostle therefore also lists meekness among the fruits of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is ... meekness” (Gal 5:23).

A virtue never functions independently. The one virtue will always beget the other, and the one will be supportive of the other. This is also true for meekness.

(1) It issues forth from a heart that is united with God in Christ. When man has God as his portion, he has everything and has no need for anything beyond. He does not look to others in such a manner, as if he could expect something from them. He is not afraid of anyone taking something away from him, for such a person perceives all men as being but tools in the hands of his God, whom He will utilize to his advantage. If someone says anything evil

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<sup>7</sup> The Statenvertaling reads as follows: “Hij legt weg voor de oprechten een bestendig wezen,” that is, “He furnishes the righteous with a steadfast disposition.”

about or to him, he understands that God has ordered it to be so. If anyone inflicts evil upon him, he understands that God has directed it to be so, and he acquiesces in the wise and good government of his God. He understands that if he were to become wrathful and envious, he would be opposing God Himself, and he therefore endures everything with a quiet and calm conscience.

(2) The denial of self proceeds from this disposition. The meek person no longer considers his own desires; he neither seeks nor is desirous for their fulfillment. He has discarded the desire for vain honor, the love of men, prominence, and the riches of this world. He does not want these. Why would he then quarrel about such things or become angry if someone were to challenge him in this respect? This disposition in turn engenders meekness.

(3) The meek person also loves his neighbor. One can endure much from someone he loves. A man with love will not do evil to his neighbor; the man who loves people will be grieved that his neighbor, in wronging him, is sinning. He observes his neighbor with compassion upon seeing him in such turmoil, thus bringing the wrath of God upon him. Should he then yet add grief to his neighbor's grief? Behold, he is therefore meek.

### *The Effects of Meekness*

*The effects of meekness are:*

(1) *A being congenial*, so that it is a pleasant and effortless task to interact with the meek person. A meek person is loved by everyone, and as long as his disposition is such, he will not be hated by anyone—even though he may be ridiculed by some as having a vile and contemptible spirit. He will not have as much opposition as others, and there will even be among worldly people those who defend him. People will find his company enjoyable, and after having departed from him, the fellowship they had with him will make some impression upon the heart, convincing them that he is a godly person, whereas they themselves are not. They will thus become desirous to be like him.

(2) *A relinquishing of one's rights*. A meek person is a wise person; his wisdom is of a meek nature, and he is neither witless nor insensitive. He can indeed judge what is right, and he is capable of standing up for his rights. He will do so if this is God's will and he is under obligation to do so. However, he does so with quiet earnestness, freedom, and in a noble manner—always in such a manner that his meekness shines forth. If, however, there are matters in which he may yield, then he would rather do so than to gain that which is his ultimate right by fighting for it.

(3) *Enduring injustice.* A meek person neither wishes to get even nor to avenge himself—even if he were able to do so. Instead, the meek person will endure this and overlook it as if it had not been perpetrated upon him. “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2).

(4) *The forgiving of injustice.* Forgiveness does not merely consist in a refraining from taking vengeance, meanwhile harboring animosity and hatred in the heart. Instead, it consists in not holding the offender accountable and in loving him no less than before. It means that the offender must be treated as if he had not committed the deed. This is what Christ teaches: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any” (Mark 11:25). The apostle requires this: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any” (Col 3:13).

(5) *The rewarding of evil with good.* To render evil for evil is carnal, to reward good with evil is devilish, but to reward evil with good is Christian. The latter is true for the meek person: “Not rendering evil for evil” (1 Pet 3:9); “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt 5:44); “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (Rom 12:20).

### *The Need for Self-Examination*

Meekness has been held before you in its nature, so that it might be to you as a mirror in which you can observe yourself—a mirror whereby you can ascertain how much or little you resemble a meek person. Apply this freely to your heart. To be void of the virtue of meekness—and thus to have a disposition which is to the contrary—is a most abominable sin and a more wretched condition to be in than you imagine. Be first convinced of this. Take then to heart what manner of person you are before God and what will befall you due to this.

(1) Do you have such an even-tempered and stable disposition of heart when people maltreat you in word and deed? Does your inner peace issue forth from union with God in Christ, from denial of self, from love for your neighbor? Are you easy to get along with, flexible, agreeable, sweet, and loveable as you interact with your neighbor? Can you relinquish your right without being disturbed about it and do you yield in a good-natured manner? Do you endure it when you have been wronged—even then when you would be able to avenge yourself? Do you heartily forgive your neighbor, as if he had not wronged you at all and without affecting your love to him? Do you reward evil with good, doing so sincerely

and affectionately? Before you answer me, reflect upon your dealings with your superiors, equals, strangers, friends, subordinates, wife, children, and servants. Having done so, what is your answer upon these questions? Have your dealings been characterized by meekness? Oh, how many must be convinced here that as yet they have nothing—yes nothing—of this meekness! It is thus a certainty that everything said in God’s Word about the meek is not applicable to you.

(2) Or do you have a cross, fretful, and irritable nature? Do you have as many spines as a porcupine does, or are you as prickly as a thorn bush, so that one cannot be in your presence without being pricked? That this is so is proven by the fact you are always in trouble—now with the one and then with the other—and that you are always complaining that you are being wronged, and that your servants do not fulfil their obligations toward you. Be assured, however, that you are to be blamed; you have a nature which is disagreeable and irritable. Are you readily provoked to anger, does your blood boil, and do all sorts of emotions stir in you, even though you do not say a word? Or do you show your anger by way of an angry countenance? Or does your anger manifest itself by speaking ill-advisedly, by quarreling, or by using abusive language? And would this not result in physical abuse if others would not prevent you from doing so? Perhaps you do not lash out in word or deed, but rather swallow it for the time being. Does this, however, beget a hatred and aversion in your heart which manifests itself subsequently—when there is an opportunity—in vengeance, so that you may requite another for the evil previously committed; or do you delight yourself if something evil befalls him? How does your conscience respond to all these questions? Behold, you are thus void of meekness and have a spiteful disposition.

*God’s Inevitable Judgment upon Those who Are void of Meekness*

Come, consider what God says about you, and what will befall you.

First, you are in the same sinful condition in which the first world was, this being the reason why it perished in the flood. You must anticipate a similar end. “The earth was filled with violence. And God said ... I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:11,13).

Secondly, you have Cain’s disposition and you will not escape Cain’s punishment: “And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And now art thou cursed from the earth” (Gen 4:5,11).

Thirdly, you resemble Lamech, whose wrath was so great that he said, “I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and

sevenfold” (Gen 4:23-24). If anyone considers Lamech to be a courageous man, this is an indication that he finds delight in his abominable disposition, and that he himself is abominable before God. This has been recorded to Lamech’s eternal shame, and such a person will be a marked man as he was.

Fourthly, as often as wrath, anger, hatred, and vengefulness arise, so often are you a murderer before God. As often as you cast a wrathful glance at your neighbor, as many a biting word as you express toward him, so often are you committing murder: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15). God curses the perpetrators of anger: “Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel” (Gen 49:7). And, what will be the end of all murderers? “But ... murderers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). Therefore, as insignificant as it may seem to you that you are without meekness; as heroic as you consider yourself in your wrath and in avenging yourself, so abominable you are in the eyes of God, and so dreadful will your end be if you do not repent.

Do not imagine that your pretenses will excuse you before God.

*Evasive Argument #1:* A person is human, and one simply cannot overlook all the wrong that is done to him; flesh and blood cannot endure all this.

*Answer:* Flesh and blood will also not inherit the kingdom of God. It will even be more difficult for you to avoid the fire of hell.

*Evasive Argument #2:* If I simply take everything, people would act that much more boldly toward me. Therefore, I must fight back and teach them to respect my rights and to leave me alone.

*Answer:* You will thereby neither protect your rights nor enjoy your peace; rather, you will lose both and must anticipate the judgment of God to your terror—instead of enjoying peace you will experience terror within and without.

*Evasive Argument #3:* In doing so they assault my reputation, and this I must protect.

*Answer:* In doing so you will not defend your reputation, but bring shame upon yourself. The best way to defend your reputation is to let your conversation be steadfast and godly. And, if you are accused, then you are to demonstrate your innocence quietly and to answer softly if the opportunity is there. If not, be silent, for that is better than to lash out in anger; that is the work of fools (Eccles 7:9).

### *Believers Exhorted to Be Meek*

Believers, even if worldly men are rancorous, wrathful, and

vengeful, this conduct is not becoming to you. You are to have an aversion for, and to hate and flee these things; instead, endeavor to be meek.

First, God denominates you a meek person on the basis of this virtue: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth" (Zeph 2:3). The earth is filled with violence, and the very best among natural men is but a thorn. God's children are, however, of a different and more excellent spirit, manifesting this in their meekness. If you are denominates as a meek person, how much you then ought to endeavor to strive for consistency between your name and your actions!

Secondly, you are a Christian because you resemble Christ and live according to His laws. Jesus was meek and established Himself as an example for you, so that you would learn from Him and imitate Him. "Learn of Me; for I am meek" (Matt 11:29); "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1). Christ commands you to be thus: "Seek meekness" (Zeph 2:3); "... that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness" (Eph 4:1-2). Behold, there you have the example and commandment of Jesus, whom you love, and whom you desire to imitate and obey. Therefore, this ought to motivate you strongly to strive for meekness.

Thirdly, it behooves you to be meek in all that you undertake as a Christian.

(1) When you are to hear the Word of God, it must be done with meekness: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21).

(2) When you are to pray, it must occur while "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim 2:8).

(3) When you are to make profession of and give an account of your faith and hope, such is to occur "with meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15).

(4) When you are called to instruct others, then meekness is also mandatory: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim 2:25).

(5) Meekness is needed when rebuking: "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal 6:1). You are obligated to perform these duties, and without meekness they cannot be performed. It will, however, be pleasing to both God and man if you perform them in meekness. Such conduct will bring forth excellent fruit and you will have a peaceful conscience.

Fourthly, meekness is a glorious ornament of the church. The church is the glory of Christ, and when she is glorious, God and Christ are glorified. The latter is the desire of a true member of the church. It is his desire that he may contribute something to that, and

since meekness is most eminent in glory in the eyes of those who are within and without, the Christian must strive in an extraordinary manner to be adorned with this ornament. Meekness itself is an ornate garment which covers nakedness and adorns with beauty the one who wears it. “Put on therefore ... bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col 3:12). Furthermore, the meek are also adorned with salvation. “He will beautify the meek with salvation” (Ps 149:4). This ornament makes them pleasing in God’s sight: “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet 3:4). It is pleasing to man: “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Prov 19:11). Thus, the meek person adorns the church, shining forth there as a bright star.

Fifthly, great promises are made to the meek, which will most certainly be fulfilled for them, such as:

(1) answers upon their prayers: “Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble” (Ps 10:17);

(2) being led by the Spirit: “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach his way” (Ps 25:9);

(3) being filled with grace: “He giveth grace unto the lowly” (Prov 3:34);

(4) the experience of joy: “The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord” (Isa 29:19).

(5) deliverance from all who trouble them. Even though the meek may be without protection against the unrighteous dealings of such, they nevertheless have one who takes note of them and rescues them: “When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth” (Ps 76:9); “The Lord lifteth up the meek” (Ps 147:6);

(6) provision for all that they stand in need of for soul and body: “The meek shall eat and be satisfied” (Ps 22:26); “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Ps 37:11); “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). The world, and all that is in it, is theirs; they are its possessors (1 Cor 3:21-22). Whatever they possess—be it much or little—they have in the favor of God, and they make use of it with a peaceful conscience. They will not have much opposition in the world, for rarely will anyone oppress one who is truly meek; and if he does, he will cease as soon as he perceives his meekness. Yes others, even natural men, will protect the meek, and thus the meek sojourn safely through this world. They do not have the troubles which other people have. Therefore, they who covet these promises ought to endeavor to be meek.

Sixthly, the meek are wise, are of a noble spirit, and have strength to conquer all resistance. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov 16:32). The meek person can overcome where a rich person with his money, a prominent person with his prominence, and an angry person with his boisterous violence, must fail. He will conquer his enemies solely by his meekness and by rewarding them good for evil. “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head” (Prov 25:21-22). This will be as unbearable to such a person as being burned by fiery coals. He will perceive that his wrath and hostility are not given any more attention than the anger of an ant, which will not concern anyone in the least. He will perceive that the meek person excels him since he rules over his heart—and thus the enemy will have to subject himself as a vanquished one. This is unbearable to him, and it ought to lead him to repentance—which occasionally occurs. He should learn from this not to oppose the meek person, since he will no longer receive any attention. He will no more be able to offend him than a large fly can trouble an ox while sitting upon his horns, but will himself be conquered.

#### *Advice for Improvement*

Meditate upon these arguments and allow them to have effect upon your heart in order that from henceforth you would endeavor to attain a meek disposition of heart. Be assured that you are neither born with it, will not receive it by wishing for it, nor will readily acquire it. Effort is required for it. Therefore, engage yourself in this duty.

(1) To that end you must continually take notice of those occasions when you lose your meek disposition; that is, when impatience and anger arise in you, and manifest themselves unto others. Reflect upon this for some time until it grieves you and you see your foolishness, sinfulness, and offensive behavior, and make renewed resolutions to correct this.

(2) Flee the company of impatient and angry people, for this is as infectious as the plague. “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Prov 22:24-25). When you observe such and their behavior, take note of their foolishness so that you may develop an aversion for it, and, by way of a vivid example, may learn that “anger resteth in the bosom of fools” (Eccles 7:9).

(3) Seek the company of the meek and carefully observe their

conduct. Observe in them how desirable meekness is. “Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Prov 16:19).

(4) Always hold before you the example of the meek Jesus. To that end read the gospels frequently, continually taking note of the manner in which the Lord Jesus manifested His meekness. Impress this upon your heart in such a manner, so that, so to speak, the very nature of it is transferred unto you. And if something occurs which is unsettling, allow your thoughts to turn to the gospels to ascertain whether or not the Lord Jesus has been in such a situation and how He conducted Himself under those circumstances, or how He would have conducted Himself in such a situation—and then follow His example.

(5) When you (either within or outside of your home) come into the company of people, arm yourself with meekness, conducting yourself as if you are entering into battle. Make the express resolution that you will be meek and ask the Lord for strength for the moment. If the occasion arises, see to it that the enemy gain not the advantage, and when you are again alone, reflect upon how you have fared. If all went well, thank the Lord and keep this peaceful disposition of heart in remembrance, in order that you may thus be stirred up to conduct yourself again in this manner. If you fell into sin, grieve over this; however, do not become discouraged, for one cannot learn to practice this glorious virtue that quickly. Instead, take new courage so that you may fare that much better in the future.

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 CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE
 

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## Peaceableness

Love for our neighbor, humility, and meekness will beget peaceableness. Wherever the first three are to be found, the last will also be found. It is this virtue which we now wish to consider. In Hebrew this is expressed by the word *menuchah* (מנוחה), which means *rest or quietness*. A peacemaker is quiet and at peace within and without—personally, as well as in the presence of others. There is also the word *shalom* (שׁלוֹם), which is a derivative of *shalam* (שָׁלַם). This means: *to be prosperous, to have peace, to complete*. A peacemaker has peace, is prosperous, and completes his task with ease. In Greek we have the words *eirenikos* (εἰρηνικὸς) and *eirenopoios* (εἰρηνοποιός). This word is derived from a root which means “to bind together,” for peace unites the hearts, and binds people together. The apostle therefore speaks of “the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

*Peaceableness is a believer’s quiet and contented disposition of soul, inclining him toward, and causing him to strive for, the maintaining of a relationship with his neighbor characterized by sweet unity—doing so in the way of truth and godliness.*

The *subject* of peaceableness is the soul of the believer, this being the exclusive residence of this virtue. Even though the unconverted may refrain from strife and discord, they do not have this peaceable disposition of heart. “And the way of peace have they not known” (Rom 3:17). Rather, it is the ornament of possessors of grace, Christians who have been reconciled by the blood of Christ, who is their peace (cf. Col 1:20; Eph 2:14). They, having received the Lord Jesus by faith unto the forgiveness of sins, are justified, and thus have peace with God (Rom 5:1), which peace passes all understanding, and keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7). While thus enjoying peace with

God in their conscience, it is as if all that is in the world is at peace with them, they are in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field are at peace with them (Job 5:23). They are thus disposed when they interact with people. Their heart goes out after them and their peaceable heart desires nothing but harmony, even when they are alone. Such a disposition is to be found, however, in none but believers, faith being the means whereby such a peaceable disposition is engendered (Rom 5:1). Since peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), no one possesses this unless they are partakers of the Holy Spirit.

The *object* of this virtue is our *neighbor*—all men. A peacemaker is continually at war with the devil, the world, and his corrupt flesh—with them he neither desires nor seeks to be at peace. The more he hates and opposes them, the better he likes it. However, toward men as men—as his neighbors—he has a peaceable heart and with them he endeavors to live in peace. First and foremost, the peacemaker lives in peace with the godly. He has a spiritual and very intimate relationship with them whereby their hearts are united in Christ, having the same Spirit and the same regenerate nature. “Have peace one with another” (Mark 9:50). One must, however, not limit himself to the godly. Rather, peaceableness extends to all men, as from his side the peacemaker does not give any reason for discord, and even if he has a just cause, he will overlook it, and will not allow it to disturb the peace. This is the essence of the apostle’s exhortation: “If it be possible [*that is, if people can be persuaded to be at peace and if the peace can be preserved*], as much as lieth in you [*that is, that there be no fault from your side, but strive for this with all your might*], live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18).

The *essence* of this virtue consists in *an inclination, proceeding from inner quietness and contentment, to live in harmony with his neighbor*. A peacemaker, living in the enjoyment of peace with God, has a heart free from strife, which, relative to his neighbor, is content and at peace. He does not harbor thoughts of having been wronged by his neighbor, of envy, or of any discontentment. Rather, he is at peace within—calm, quiet, and satisfied. When he thinks about his neighbor, his heart desires to dwell in harmony with him, and he interacts with him in a most pleasant manner. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov 3:17). Thus the essence of peace consists in hearts being knit together. It is therefore referred to as a bond: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). He is of one heart with others: “That ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind” (1 Cor 1:10). This

occurred in the original church: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32).

### *A Fruit of Regeneration*

Such a peaceable disposition does not issue forth from man’s nature, for the one man is as a wolf to the other. God changes that cruel and savage heart, however, and grants His children to be at peace with Him in Christ; this in turn engenders a peaceable heart toward one’s neighbor. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain” (Isa 11:6,9). The Lord would transform the barbarous heathen into such persons and thus the apostle enumerates peace as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace” (Gal 5:22). The apostle therefore wishes the peace of God upon the congregation. “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means” (2 Thess 3:16). Thus He is frequently called the God of peace, for He gives peace, and delights in those who are peacemakers (cf. Rom 15:33; 2 Cor 13:11).

The *effect* or fruit of peaceableness is *a striving to interact with our neighbor in sweet harmony*. It will not avail us to imagine that we have a peaceable heart, and to be enamored with such a disposition. To strive for a peaceable relationship with our neighbor without a peaceable heart is but the fruit of nature or hypocrisy. To imagine that we have a peaceable heart and yet not to strive for a peaceable relationship is but a deceiving of self. A peaceable heart cannot fail to manifest peaceableness, and our seeking for harmony by way of an amiable relationship will be commensurate with the strength of that virtue within. It is thus that we shall be able to tolerate those who are not peaceable, and compel them to be peaceable by way of a steadfast manifestation of our love for peace. We must thus convince everyone that we seek peace, and that from our side this peace cannot be disturbed, even though someone else from his side may do so. “Live in peace” (2 Cor 13:11).

(1) The word *live* implies activity. To remain in seclusion without having any fellowship with people; without saying either good or evil about anyone; to be able to accept that everyone prospers; and neither to quarrel, fight, nor be angry—all that does not constitute living in peace. To live in peace implies having fellowship with people in a pleasant and harmonious manner.

(2) The word *live* implies continual steadfastness. To occasionally conduct ourselves peacefully is not the same as living peacefully.

Rather, this mandates a continual activity and a perseverance in this respect.

(3) The word *live* implies “a finding delight in.” A peacemaker is in his element when he is at peace; he is then as a fish in water. When he may be in a peaceable relationship with people, he is joyful—just as a healthy person delights himself and is of a joyful spirit. “Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14); “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps 34:14). It is easy to maintain peace when someone else encounters us in a pleasant and peaceable manner, and deals with us according to our wishes. This is not how matters are, however; people are motivated by self-love and they will wrong us in both word and deed. At one time we may encounter someone who is cross, and then again another who is angry, stirring up our corrupt nature to respond to our neighbor in like manner. The peacemaker overlooks this, however, responds in a good-natured manner, and gives in—even if this is to his own detriment and causes him to lose the esteem of the world. As one who rounds up and hunts wildlife, so he will seek peace and pursue it; and once he attains it, he considers himself to be victorious.

### *The Practice of Peaceableness*

However pleasant and desirable peace may be, we must nevertheless be on our guard that we do not pursue and maintain it at the expense of truth and godliness. In our definition we therefore added the following limitation: “in the way of truth and godliness.” There are people who are fearful of experiencing the displeasure and opposition of someone else, and therefore, however much they may be set in their ways and will protect that, so to speak, with a knife in their hands, they nevertheless easily yield that which is not theirs but was entrusted by God to their safekeeping, namely, truth and godliness—even if this would mean the loss of everything, yes, even their life. Such people will then hide themselves behind the phrase “peace, peace.” This is clear proof that they neither belong to the peacemakers in Israel, nor do they truly have a peaceable heart. They do not seek peace, but their own expedience, and therefore they say, “Peace, peace,” even if this would mean peace with the devil and the world and that they would eternally have to miss peace with God. If new errors manifest themselves, such people insist that they must be silent and give in, for else there would be unrest; *peace is best*. If there is a sinner who needs to be converted from the error of his ways by way of exhortation and rebuke, one must refrain from this; he might become angry and cause us trouble. If the world insists that rather

than manifesting godliness we conceal it, conforming ourselves to the world, such people will be prepared again to do so, for they do not wish unrest and therefore they say by renewal, “Peace, peace.” God says, however, that peace and truth, peace and godliness, must go hand in hand. If injury is done to one of those, we must neither set aside our peaceable heart, nor refrain from pursuing peace from our side. Instead, we are to oppose error and protect the truth. We shall thus oppose ungodliness and adhere to godliness. If others cannot endure this; if this displeases them and they cause trouble and create difficulties—then this is for their account. A peacemaker will nevertheless adhere to truth and godliness, for God wills that these be conjoined. “Therefore love the truth and peace” (Zech 8:19). Athanasius would rather lose his position than to depart from one letter of the truth. Luther was accustomed to say: “I would rather have the heavens fall down, than that one crumb of truth would perish.” “Follow peace with all men, and holiness” (Heb 12:14); “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps 85:10). The ungodly Jehu answered the question of Joram very well: “Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many” (2 Kings 9:22). “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

This is the virtue which is so earnestly commanded and insisted upon everywhere in God’s Word: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they will be called the children of God” (Matt 5:9); “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace” (Rom 14:19); “Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess 5:13).

#### *Are We Peacemakers?*

Behold, here is a clear mirror in which you may behold not only your obligation toward peaceableness, but in which you may examine your own disposition and doings. Is peace with God, on the basis of the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus, your portion, having received this by faith unto justification, and does your peaceableness flow from that fountain? Do you know the distinction between the godly and those who are without grace? Is your soul one with the godly in Christ, and does your exercise of peace proceed from this unity? Do you maintain a peaceable disposition from your side and still strive to be at peace when natural man comes against you with much evil? Is your heart at rest, content, and pleased as far as your neighbor is concerned when you think of

him in seclusion—or if you see or speak with him? Or, are there alien, antagonistic, angry, envious, and discontented motions within you? Do you endeavor to manifest your peaceable heart in deeds—even when others are angry at you and commit evil toward you? Do you love the truth and godliness so much that you do not wish to depart from it one iota, even if the entire world were to assault you, and do you nevertheless maintain a peaceable disposition of heart toward such, seeking by your deeds to manifest peace from your side? How does your soul respond to this in the presence of God? Do you belong to the peacemakers? Do you truthfully possess this in principle, and do you observe your deficiency with sorrow?

Or are you convinced that you are truly destitute of this disposition and its resultant deeds? How happy you would be if you were to be convinced of this and were to remain under such conviction until you would be desirous to earnestly seek the Lord Jesus, attain peace with God, and be peaceably inclined toward your neighbor! To that end, reflect for a moment upon the conviction of this sin, and consider at once how God views you, and the judgments which will come upon you. I am addressing you who, when you are in seclusion, are as cruel wolves and tigers; who are as a turbulent sea which cannot be at rest; whose heart is filled with hateful, angry, envious, and quarrelsome thoughts and motions. I am addressing you who are increasingly provoked whenever you see him whom you consider to have offended you, and who explode as gunpowder as soon as someone speaks inappropriately to you or harms you. I am addressing you who not only personally live in discord within and without, but also cause discord between others, and repeatedly and increasingly fan the fire of dissension; and you who have peace in your mouth but discord in your heart. Jeremiah speaks of such: “One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait” (Jer 9:8). Hear now what God says concerning you.

#### *Threatenings Against the Unpeaceful*

First, you are without grace, for you deny everything which denominates you a Christian. God, whom you claim to be your Father, is a God of peace, and you are void of it. Christ, whom you call your Savior, is the Prince of Peace, and you live in continual discord. The Holy Spirit, of whom you claim to be a partaker, works peace, and you live in dissension. The gospel by which you claim to have been regenerated is a gospel of peace, and yet you live in hatred, anger, envy, and discord. You call yourself a child of

God; however, such are peaceable and you are not peaceable. You partake of the Lord's Supper by which the hearts of the godly are knit together, whereas your heart is divided against everyone. You will thus perceive that you have no part in all these matters of which you are boasting.

Secondly, you bear the image of the devil and his children. Your heart and countenance are the express image of Satan, the murderer of men. You are what the ungodly are described to be. The first world was full of violence (Gen 6:12), and so are you. Ishmael was a wild man; his hand was against every man and every man's hand was against him (Gen 6:12); such is your condition. Hypocritical and ungodly Israel served God in an external sense; however, they lived in strife and debate, and in fighting and smiting (Isa 58:4); such is true of you.

Thirdly, God abhors you and will exercise vengeance upon you: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: ... A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov 6:16,19); "Their tongue is as an arrow shot out. ... Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this" (Jer 9:8-9).

Since discord, dissension, and quarreling are evidences of an evil and murderous heart which is filled with anger, envy, vengefulness; since such will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but rather will have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, you cannot expect anything else. You who live in discord with men, be afraid of yourself and of the wrath of God. God also lives in discord with you and He will prevail over you—which He will cause you to experience.

#### *A Deficient Peaceableness*

And you, who truly—and in principle—have a peaceable heart (with so little evidence of it) the foregoing is also meant to be a mirror for you. How little do you resemble this disposition and the life of peacemakers! How many discordant thoughts do you have, and how sharp and biting are your words! How readily do you quarrel and entertain animosity within your heart! How this ought to grieve you! Mourn over this and earnestly seek to banish all discord, striving to have a peaceable heart and to live peaceably, for:

First, the absence of peace in both your heart and deeds will hinder you in all your religious exercises and will contaminate them.

(1) Your heart will lose its disposition to approach unto God, to pray, and to have fellowship with Him. "... that your prayers be not

hindered” (1 Pet 3:7). Therefore, Paul says, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim 2:8).

(2) It causes those who are without and within to be greatly offended. Everyone will be disturbed when they hear a godly person quarrel and argue, for everyone is fully convinced that such is contrary to the nature of the godly and is not becoming for children of God. What does the Lord Jesus say about those who give offense? “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt 18:6). You who are godly, ought not this to deter you from discord?

(3) You thus become incapable of being of benefit to others, while using all your energy to cause discord in the church. “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16).

Secondly, all that is in and related to the church counsels you to be peaceable.

(1) You have been born in the church and have been received as her member. However, the church is called *Shulamite*, that is, *the peaceable one* (Song 6:13). Is it then becoming to you to live in discord and disharmony? Does it not behoove you to live in peace?

(2) God, who, while you were yet enemies, has reconciled you to Himself, is the *God of peace* (Rom 16:20). He desires peace and finds delight in those who are peaceable. Since this God is your Father and you address Him as “Abba, Father!,” then how do you dare to come to Him with a heart void of peace and a quarrelsome tongue? How can you have communion with Him while being in such a disposition?

(3) The Lord Jesus—your Bridegroom who embodies all your comfort, delight, and love—is the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6), and has reconciled you to God with the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). He commands you: “Have peace one with another” (Mark 9:50); therefore, “Be at peace” (1 Thess 5:13).

(4) The Holy Spirit, who resides in you, has regenerated you, teaches you, and guides you, engenders a peaceable heart within you (Gal 5:22). He warns you against discord, and continually stirs you up to be at peace. Should you not follow Him? Should you grieve Him who calls you to be at peace (1 Cor 7:15)?

(5) The gospel, which is the seed of regeneration and your spiritual nourishment, is the *gospel of peace* (Eph 6:15). How it therefore behooves you (in harmony with this gospel) to live in peace!

(6) The members of the church with whom you interact as family members—whom you love, and in whose presence you rejoice—

are peaceable; their heart has a peaceable disposition, and their objective and activity are the pursuit of peace. Would not you offend and grieve them by your discordant behavior? Should you corrupt and stir them up to be quarrelsome as well?

(7) The Lord Jesus denominates you as His *dove* and *sheep* (cf. Song 2:14; John 10:27). They are among the most peaceful of animals; would a sheep assume the nature of a wolf? Should you then be present among the sheep as if you were a bear?

(8) The sacraments are not only seals of your peace with God but also engender mutual union—not only as brothers and sisters, but even as members of one body who live by one and the same Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13); “For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). How then do you dare to entertain a discordant thought; how do you dare to open your mouth to quarrel, and show an unfriendly face to someone?

### *Peaceableness Adorns the Christian*

Thirdly, consider furthermore the glory of this virtue. It is an extraordinary ornament for a Christian.

(1) It is the manifestation of a meek and quiet spirit, being an incorruptible ornament “which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet 3:4).

(2) It displays a denial of self whereby we overlook the failures of our neighbor and ignore the wrong done to us. “It is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Prov 19:11).

(3) Herein heavenly wisdom is manifested; quarreling is the work of fools. “A fool’s lips enter into contention” (Prov 18:6). However, to be peaceable is the work of the wise: “But the wisdom that is from above is ... peaceable” (James 3:17); “For wisdom is better than rubies” (Prov 8:11); “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!” (Prov 16:16); “Wisdom is better than strength” (Eccles 9:16). Wisdom causes the countenance of man to be radiant: “A man’s wisdom maketh his face to shine” (Eccles 8:1). However, all these delightful matters are comprehended in peaceableness.

(4) When the church manifests herself as adorned with the ornament of peaceableness, she is a lovely and delightful object to all who observe her. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps 133:1). Therefore, shine forth in the church with the eminent ornament of peaceableness.

Fourthly, peaceableness has most eminent rewards.

(1) A peacemaker is joyful: “To the counsellors of peace is joy” (Prov 12:20).

(2) Peacemakers are fit to engage in all spiritual exercises toward God and man. Their heart does not condemn them and they therefore have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21). All their words and actions are pleasant, for they proceed from a heart which is at liberty. They are seasoned with salt, that is, with wisdom; salt and peace are therefore conjoined (Mark 9:50).

(3) The Lord dwells with peacemakers in His love and favor. “Live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Cor 13:11). To enjoy the presence of God in the manifestation of His love toward us, is everything. If God is for us, who will then be against us? If He grants tranquility, who will then cause turmoil?

(4) God’s blessings are upon the peacemakers: “There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps 133:3). Therefore, let him live in peace who desires to receive all manner of blessings from the Lord.

(5) In summary, God declares them to be His children and the heirs of salvation: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt 5:9). More we cannot desire; therefore, be diligent to live in peace.

### *Means to Cultivate Peaceableness*

If you are desirous to live in peace:

(1) Crucify your desire for money, honor, and love; it is impossible to have and maintain a peaceable heart without self-denial. Or else you yourself will be the cause of others quarrelling with you, since you are seeking after what they pursue. It can easily be that you will encounter them while in such a disposition, and your inner peace will thereby be disturbed. Whatever stirs in the heart will soon spill forth from our mouths. Greediness is a breaker of the peace. “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house” (Prov 15:27). Ambition begets strife: “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife” (Prov 28:25). Wherever there is envy toward the honor, gain, and love that others enjoy, the heart cannot but be restless, and this will readily burst forth one way or the other. Envy and strife are therefore conjoined, for together they are a fountain of confusion and every evil work (James 3:16).

(2) Keep to yourself and let others govern their own matters. Do not appoint yourself as a detective and judge concerning the deeds of others; close your ears for backbiters. Do not listen for what is being said about you. “A whisperer separateth chief friends” (Prov 16:28); “Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Prov 26:20).

Solomon therefore wisely counseled: “Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee” (Eccles 7:21). And regarding you, remain silent in order that you speak no evil about your neighbor, for that will continually bring you in trouble and frequently stir up discord. “He that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (Prov 13:3). If you hear others quarreling, see to it that you do not involve yourself in this quarrel. Do not appoint yourself as judge, and then immediately execute your sentence by rendering assistance to the one party. It is an entirely different matter when you counsel others to be at peace. “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears” (Prov 26:17). Such a one (who minds the matters of others) is thus in peril of being bitten. “But let none of you suffer ... as a busybody in other men’s matters” (1 Pet 4:15).

(3) Be always the least—both in your own eyes as well as in your conduct toward others. Endure being wronged, and forgive such deeds (Col 3:13). In all things yield to the will of others, insofar as this is not contrary to the will of God, following Abraham’s example: “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee ... if thou wilt take the left hand, then I shall go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I shall go to the left” (Gen 13:8-9). In this respect one will become rich by giving. By yielding in some measure one will gain peace and a peaceful heart, which is more precious than gold, rubies, and power. “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps 34:14).

(4) If someone else encounters you in an unpleasant manner, or if you detect the first stirring of displeasure, arm yourself at once and resist strife at the very outset; be completely silent. For, if you are not on your guard, the quarrel will increase hand over hand and you will not be able to hold it back. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water” (Prov 17:14).



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 CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX
 

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## Diligence

God has granted man a soul and a body, as well as the ability to be occupied and to glorify Him with both. Adam, even while in the state of perfection, had physical labor assigned to him. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15).

After the fall it is also God’s will that man be occupied, and He appoints to every man his labor. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called” (1 Cor 7:20). God wills that man not only perform his calling, but that he do so *diligently*. This virtue we shall now discuss.

In Hebrew this is expressed by the word *Charoots* (חרוץ), which means: “sharp,” “pointed,” “diligent.” In Greek it is expressed by the word *akribeia* (ἀκριβεία). This is expressive of dealing with a matter with utmost care and prudence for the purpose of assuring that the project might be executed and turn out well. Thus, diligence implies considerably more than working only. In turn the word *akribos* (ἀκριβῶς) is derived from this, which means “diligent.” “He spake and taught *diligently* the things of the Lord” (Acts 18:25); “See then that ye walk circumspectly (*that is diligently, precisely*)” (Eph 5:15). The Greek also use the word *epimeleia* (ἐπιμελεια), which is a derivative of *melei* (μελεῖ). This conveys the dealing with a matter in a manner which exceeds the ordinary—with the utmost care. “... seek diligently till she find it” (Luke 15:8). The commonly used word is *spoude* (σπουδή) from which our words *speed* and *to speed* are derived. It is thus expressive of readiness and being industrious. “He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence” (Rom 12:8).

*Diligence is the exertion of the spiritual and physical powers of a*

*believer whereby he willingly, joyously, and earnestly executes that task which God assigns him, doing so because it is the will of God.*

This virtue only functions in a believer. The unconverted are also diligent in their own way, but their diligence differs as much from the diligence of believers as life differs from death. The diligence of a natural man proceeds from a perverted heart filled with vices. His heart has neither desire nor love for that task as being the will of God. Instead, his objective is to earn a living, please people, or to attain some other objective. That diligence which is a Christian virtue, however, proceeds from a regenerate and believing heart. Faith unites the soul with Christ, and proceeds through Christ unto God as a reconciled Father. This in turn begets love toward God which motivates one to please the Lord, and thus believers view their task as having been commanded them by God. This engenders a willingness to accept this task, joyfulness in performing it, and industriousness to bring it to a good end—all this because it is the will of God and in order that God might be pleased with that work.

*The object of diligence is the task which God assigns us.* God, in His wisdom and goodness, has ordained that the one man shall live from the other. For that purpose He has instituted various ranks among men and has given each his own task. To one He assigns a task in the church, to another in civil government, and to the other to labor in the home. To each man he assigns a calling: The one becomes a fisherman, the other a farmer, the other a businessman, and the other a craftsman. Among them there is variety as well: The one is in need of services, whereas the other renders his services. A believer takes note of his station and condition, simultaneously recognizing it to be a divine appointment; and with David, he surrenders himself to the service of the Lord. “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant” (Ps 116:16). He is thus satisfied with the Lord’s appointment for him, irrespective of whether it is prestigious or insignificant, easy or difficult—it does not matter to him. Since the Lord is sovereign, and at the same time wise, good, and a rewarder of all His faithful servants, the believer accepts his task as one to which he has been called by God (1 Cor 7:20).

#### *Exertion of One’s Spiritual and Physical Faculties*

*The essence of diligence consists in the exertion of the faculties of both soul and body.* The soul of a diligent person is fully engaged to execute the task at hand well.

First, he engages his *intellect* to consider in what manner, and by what means, he may execute that task in the best possible manner.

His mind is focused upon the task while being engaged in it. David conducted himself thus in all that he did: "... a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters" (1 Sam 16:18); "He ... guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Ps 78:72). Solomon says concerning a wise servant: "A wise servant shall have rule" (Prov 17:2); "A man shall be commended according to his wisdom" (Prov 12:8).

Secondly, *the will* is also engaged toward this duty in the following manner:

(1) *In willingness*. This is the reason why the construction of the walls of Jerusalem prospered, "for the people had a mind to work" (Neh 4:6).

(2) *Joyfully*. We shall not work as a slave—and thus contrary to our will, with a fretful heart, and for fear of being beaten. Rather, we shall do so joyfully, since we may serve such a great Lord and compassionate Father. Regardless of whether it is a spiritual or physical task, the diligent do their task joyfully, being an assignment from their Lord and Father. "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps 100:2).

Thirdly, *the emotions and affections are also engaged*. The diligent person will be *industrious, zealous*, and find *delight* in his work. Just as a spirited horse, being ready to run, will kick against the door of the stable in order that he might get out, the diligent person is likewise so industrious that he is already involved in his task before the other person is half ready. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Ps 119:60). They are as "a flaming fire" (Ps 104:4). "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings" (Prov 22:29).

Fourthly, the diligent person also *engages the powers and faculties of the body* for any physical labor to be engaged in. He neither fears perspiration nor fatigue; doing the will of the Lord is worth this to him. He considers it an honor to come before the Lord with a perspiring countenance, showing himself before Him exhausted and fatigued, saying: "This is due to the delightful and joyous engagement in Thy work." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles 9:10).

#### *The Objective of the Diligent Person*

*The laborer's objective motivates him, and this in turn determines the means he uses to attain his objective*. It is thus that the diligent person is motivated by his objective: *to do the will of God*. There are times when he could do without work as such; however, it is his life to do the will of God. Whatever the diligent do, they do it because it is

the will of God. They therefore dare neither to engage in any task which is sinful nor to make use of any sinful means for a task which in and of itself is neutral. When they are self-employed, doing their task quietly, they hold God before them as commanding them to do so. If it is their calling to work for and serve someone else, they perceive in this the will of God. This is the principle, substance, and purpose of all that they do: They serve God. The diligent person also labors to make a living, provide for his family, and give something to the needy. Ultimately this is all a doing of the will of God, however, since it pleases the Lord to provide him with all this by means of labor. The apostle Paul teaches us that when we serve men we must do so as serving God: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as ... the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:5-7).

#### *A Lack of Diligence Rebuked*

By demonstrating what diligence is as a Christian virtue, the following persons ought to be convicted:

First, all worms of the earth, who burrow in the earth as moles, who are indeed engaged in labor but, nevertheless, are without this virtue. Since God has imposed labor upon man, such persons pretend that their labor is religiously motivated. They must know, however, that work as such is not a religious activity. In order for it to have a religious dimension, it must be engaged in with that disposition, in that manner, and with that objective as we have just delineated. Our labor becomes a religious activity when we perform it with a heart united with Christ—and through Him with God—and thereby view God as a reconciled God and Father, and thus have a childlike disposition. The believer deems the labor of his calling to be a task imposed upon him by God. He fully embraces God’s will and does his work with childlike obedience, having as his objective thereby to serve and please God. You miss all this, and you must thus perceive that your labor does not have a religious perspective; rather it is but a service which you render to and for yourselves. God has pronounced this curse upon all the unconverted: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” Gen 3:17,19. It is this curse which God threatens in Deut 28:20: “The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand

unto for to do.” You are thus not able to reassure yourself that your labor is of a religious nature.

Secondly, many practice the opposite vice, namely *laziness*. This is such a shameful sin that the most lazy man does not wish to be labelled with it. Such a man ought to know that a lazy person is a disgrace to the church, no matter what his station in life may be. Regardless of whether he is a government official, minister, elder, deacon, married or unmarried person, tradesman, businessman, laborer, man or woman—if such a person is a member of the church of Christ, he or she is a disgrace to Christ and His congregation.

Who is lazy?

(1) He who is without work, for a diligent person will always find work. A lazy person complains that there is no work, for he cannot tolerate work. He has conducted himself in such a manner that no one wishes to have him in his employ, nor give him any work. He avoids opportunities to work, and if a position opens up, he excuses his idleness by saying: “I can’t work there.” However, a diligent person seeks and finds work; if the one thing does not work out, he tries something else.

(2) A lazy person is one who loves to sleep long, and who delights in turning from one side to the other in his bed, thus enabling him to slumber that much longer and that much more sweetly. Solomon describes the sluggard as such: “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep” (Prov 19:15); “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep” (Prov 6:9-10); “As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed” (Prov 26:14).

(3) A lazy person is careless. He is disorderly, brings everything into disarray, and leaves it as such. I am not suggesting that all who put their accomplishments on display are diligent; nevertheless, carelessness is a sign of laziness. Occasionally it occurs that a diligent person is so occupied that some things have to wait in preference to others; however, this is contrary to his wishes. But, to wear torn clothing, to have a house full of dust and spider webs, and to let everything be dirty, are indicative of being a lazy person. “Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Prov 23:21); “I went by the field of the slothful ... and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down” (Prov 24:30-31).

(4) A lazy person is afraid of work. He fiddles around, walks to and fro, surveys his task before he begins, and if neither necessity would compel him nor shame would pressure him, he would

refrain from working. At one time there is this obstacle and then again another. Then it is either too hot or too cold, the tools are not adequate, or the supplies are deficient. He believes that there will still be time to do the task, and he will do it at a later time. When he lies upon his bed, or walks about idly, he will form a conception of his work and contemplate how it ought to be done. Then he will contemplate how desirable the advantages are which proceed from diligence. He resolves to engage himself as such and to courageously undertake the task. It is as if he already did the work; however, when the time is there, he cannot get himself to do it. “A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom” (Prov 19:24); “The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets” (Prov 22:13). When the sluggard actually does work, it is impossible to observe him without abhorrence. It is as if his legs drag behind him, as if his legs sank into the earth up to his knees, and as if all that he touched was tar and thus cleaved to his hands. He will carefully examine what he is working on, change its position in various ways, will fit it, measure it again, and will stroke it once more; and thus time passes on. In the meantime, he will even insist upon double wages.

(5) A lazy person is a man full of ideas and imagination. As far as he is concerned, matters are not handled well; it should be handled thus and thus. He dreams of great things; in his imagination he dreams himself to be one thing, and then again another thing, always knowing best when judgment must be given in a given situation. “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason” (Prov 26:16). He believes that he has learned the wrong trade. If only he were in such and such a situation and had such and such a job, all would be well. He does not care for his profession, however, and occupies himself with trifles. He will construct one thing, disassemble something else, and do everything else—except the labor of his calling.

#### *Arguments to Deter Laziness*

We have thus fully depicted the lazy person for you, so that everyone might be convinced how much or how little he resembles such a person. And truthfully, some of the godly are also not entirely free from this. Even if they are diligent, very much is lacking as far as the pure nature of diligence (as previously described) is concerned. In order to further deter everyone from laziness, we shall hold before you some of its evil consequences.

First, God hates the sluggard, which he demonstrates by the fact that He did not want the firstborn of an ass. It either had to be

redeemed, or else its neck had to be broken (Exod 13:13). What a dreadful state it is to be hated and abhorred by God, and to be worthy of having our neck broken or our skull crushed!

Secondly, a sluggard is hated and despised by all honorable men. Men will have compassion for a poor person, but who will have compassion for a sluggard? “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him” (Prov 10:26). Such a person is a nuisance and troublesome to have around.

Thirdly, a sluggard is a burden to himself. He must work and he does not want to work. When he begins to work, it is a double burden for him. It is as if he has to pass through a hedge of thorns with his naked body, thorns pricking him from all sides. “The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns” (Prov 15:19).

Fourthly, the sluggard brings himself and his loved ones to extreme poverty, thus being worse than an infidel (1 Tim 5:8). His grief and destitute condition cause him to waste away. “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing” (Prov 13:4); “The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh” (Eccles 4:5).

Fifthly, laziness is the fountain of all manner of sin, vain thoughts, fornication 2 Sam 11:2, backbiting Rom 1:30, unrighteousness, and despair. And thus one sin begets the other, upon which at last eternal death follows as its wages (Rom 6:23). Therefore, be fearful of laziness. He who is lazy in temporal matters will be lazy in spiritual matters, and he who is diligent in spiritual matters will be diligent in temporal matters.

### *Believers Exhorted to be Diligent*

To the same degree that a believer hates and flees laziness, so earnest must he be in endeavoring to be diligent, doing so in the spiritual manner as has been proposed. A godly person cannot but be enamored when viewing this virtue in its beauty, and will earnestly endeavor to perform his physical labors in a spiritual manner. To be further stirred up in this matter, consider the following:

First, there is God’s command. You have chosen the Lord to be your God and have surrendered yourself to His service. A servant will ask his master: “What would you have me do?” You ought to conduct yourself as such. Therefore, hear God’s command: “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thess 4:11-12). It appears that this was greatly lacking in this congregation, for he exhorts them to that end also in his second letter: “For we hear that there are some which walk among

you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thess 3:11-12). These words are also addressed to you.

Secondly, diligence is an ornament to the Christian, and it removes the slanderous accusation which worldly citizens make concerning the godly; that they frequent all church services, catechism lessons, lectures, and meetings (going from the one to the other), while neglecting their calling, not giving attention to their families, and being lazy. Citizens of the world think much of diligence and have little use for godliness. You, however, ought to join them, so that everyone may be convinced that godliness renders people both diligent and upright. You will thus be an ornament to the church of God, put those to shame who slander godliness, and stir up others.

Thirdly, God holds before us His own example: to labor six days and to rest on the seventh (Exod 20:9-11). The Lord Jesus says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). It thus behooves us to be industrious. How else would you dare to expect a blessing from the Lord? Even the animals teach you to be diligent.

Fourthly, God promises His blessing upon diligence. This blessing is not inherent in industry itself, for “it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows” (Ps 127:2). Rather, it is all dependent upon God’s blessing. Moses therefore prayed, “Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it” (Ps 90:17). God causes His commandment to prosper with those who comply with it. Why is it that an ungodly man who cultivates and sows his field harvests much fruit and that a godly person, if he were not to cultivate his land and sow the seed in an appropriate manner, would come home with empty hands at harvest time? Is the earth capable in and of itself to bring forth grain? Is it not God who causes it to come forth from the earth? Why then do the ungodly receive so much and the godly so little? Does God prefer the ungodly over the godly? No; rather, God blesses what He commands, and thus the ungodly are blessed because they use the means ordained by God. If someone fails to do so, he will also miss the fruit. If, however, a godly person is industrious, he will not only have fruit, but his fruit will also be blessed. This is according to promise: “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich” (Prov 10:4); “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule” (Prov 12:24); “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth

by labour shall increase” (Prov 13:4,11). Even if a godly person does not gather as much as he would desire in a natural sense, the Lord’s blessing will nevertheless rest upon the little that he has. “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” (Ps 37:16). This promise will be confirmed to you: “For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee” (Ps 128:2).

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 CHAPTER EIGHTY-SEVEN
 

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## Compassion

God, in His wisdom and goodness, is pleased to preserve and govern all things upon this earth by the use of means. This is true for the inanimate as well as the animate creation. One person's life is contingent upon that of another. Thousands of people are involved in the well-being of one person; however, the nature of this involvement is such that each person seeks his own welfare. When help is rendered to a needy person, however, the only objective is (and indeed ought to be) the welfare of the person who is being helped; that is, when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and render assistance to the poor, sick, and weak. This practice is referred to as *compassion, benevolence, liberality, and kindness*. This is a virtue praised by all, practiced by few, and practiced rightly by even fewer.

In Hebrew we have the word מְרֶחֶם (*rechem = mercy*), which is expressive of love of the most tender sort—a love that is most readily stirred up. The tender motion of a mother toward the fruit of her womb is designated by the very same word *rechem*. The apostle therefore expresses compassion as *the bowels of mercy* Col 3:12, as they are the fountain from which compassion proceeds. The Hebrew word for compassion, רַחֲמִים (*nedivah*), means as much as being noble and willing to give freely, as the giving of the compassionate person is not compulsory. His giving is motivated by his own inclination and noble disposition. *Benevolence* is expressed as חֶסֶד (*chesed*), which means *mercifulness and kindness*, since it proceeds from a good and kind heart. The meaning of *liberality* in Hebrew is identical in our language. It means to share; that is, to divide what we have. It means that we keep one portion for ourselves and give another portion to another, and thus in that sense make

that person equal to ourselves. The Greek word *ελεος* (*eleos*) or *mercy* is indicative of being distraught. It is the result of the compassionate person taking the needs of the other person to heart to such an extent as if he himself were in that condition.

*Compassion is the inner motion of sympathy in the heart of a believer, generated by a consideration of the misery of the other person, thus motivating the believer to assist another in very deed.*

This virtue is exclusively to be found in the *believer*. Outwardly an unconverted person can perform whatever a godly person performs. The distinction is as great, however, as the difference between the artificial motion of a watch and the motion of a living being. The natural man is dead in sins and trespasses and is thus unto all good work reprobate. His compassion proceeds from a natural heart, which in reality is a having compassion with himself, imagining within himself what it would be like if he were that miserable. He therefore, so to speak, gives to himself, except that he has a heart which strives to be rewarded with honor and love. The godly person, however, has spiritual life by reason of his faith in Christ. Since he has become a partaker of the nature of Christ as a result of that union, his actions are motivated by love to God and His will. From this proceeds love for his neighbor, being inclined also to seek his spiritual welfare in order that God may be thanked and glorified by the recipient of such help. It is with such a disposition that the believer helps the needy person. The apostle therefore limits compassion to the elect who are holy and beloved: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies” (Col 3:12).

*The object of compassion is a given need.* Love manifests itself toward the neighbor by reason of his being our neighbor, irrespective of what condition he may be in. However, the compassionate person is moved in love toward his neighbor as being a needy person. There may be a spiritual need—such as when a person is unconverted and we observe him traversing the broad way to destruction. Or it can pertain to a converted person who is in a state of spiritual desertion, has strife, or any other grief of soul he may have. The compassionate person is engaged to be of help to such people—seeking to bring the one to repentance, and to strengthen and comfort the other. There can also be bodily needs which can have a variety of causes, such as illness, mishaps, loss of loved ones, poverty, hunger, or the deprivation of shelter. The compassionate person is engaged to be of help to such a person in accordance with the diversity of his perplexity. Also in this case the needy person can either be unconverted or converted. The compassionate

person is engaged toward both. However, there is the following distinction: He is much more involved with the godly, doing so with entirely different affections. However, he will also not refuse his help to others. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). Our compassion must also extend itself toward those who hate us. “Do good to them that hate you” (Matt 5:44); “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him” (Rom 12:20). Among all natural relationships with people, our relatives are nearest to us, and they must have preference over all other people. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim 5:8).

### *The Essence of Compassion*

*The essence of compassion consists in being inwardly moved to sympathy*, which, if it is right, will always be accompanied by an inclination and willingness to help. It does not consist in either fully or partially parting with our belongings. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor ... and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:3). Rather, there must be:

(1) *Sympathy*. Where there is love, there will also be sympathy when the person being loved is in need. The compassionate person will thus take note of the condition of those who come to mind. If he perceives perplexing circumstances or sorrow, he will reflect and focus upon them until he is fully cognizant of the person’s need, moved and touched by it, grieves over it and, so to speak, suffers with him: “Weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15). Job testifies of himself: “Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?” (Job 30:25). The apostle Peter exhorts us to be thus: “Finally ... having compassion one of another” (1 Pet 3:8).

(2) *Inner motions of compassion*, whereby the veracity and intensity of this sympathy is expressed, so that it touches and moves the heart. Yes, a compassionate person can be more sensitive to the suffering of another person than that person is himself. God’s mercy is expressed in this manner: “Through the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:78). Such is also stated concerning the Lord Jesus: “And Jesus, moved with compassion” (Mark 1:41); “I have compassion on the multitude” (Matt 15:32).

(3) *An inclination, willingness, and zeal to assist the needy person* in accordance with his need: “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath” (2 Cor 8:12). We observe this wherever mention is made of both the compassion of God and Christ;

that is, it immediately results in the rendering of help. Such is also the case among men, for as there can be no compassion without sympathy, likewise sympathy without the inclination and willingness to render assistance is not compassion. These go hand in hand and cannot be separated. Thus compassion consists of the inner motions of sympathy, accompanied by the inclination and willingness to help. “Put on therefore ... bowels of mercies” (Col 3:12).

#### *God, the Fountain of Compassion*

The *origin* of compassion is not found in man himself, for man is by nature filled with all manner of wickedness, maliciousness, envy, murder, malignity, without natural affection, and unmerciful Rom 1:29,31. However, as the regeneration and spiritual life of God’s children *have their origin in God*, this is likewise true for the virtue of compassion. This propensity, having been infused by God, is stirred up upon consideration of the need of someone else. If there were no objects toward whom this could be exercised, this virtue would be present in the believer as a propensity, but it would not be able to be exercised. The Lord has ordained, however, that both rich and poor will meet each other, and that there will be an abundance of objects for the exercise of compassion. Nevertheless, the priest and the Levite ignored the misery of the man who had fallen into the hands of murderers, and passed him by. However, when the Samaritan “saw him, he had compassion on him” (Luke 10:33). When a godly person meets a needy person, he will focus his attention upon him, and by reason of such observance his compassionate nature will be stirred up. Whenever mention is made of the compassion of the Lord Jesus, it is always written, “Jesus *seeing* him, her, the multitude ...,” which proves that compassion is kindled by the observance of those who are in need. A compassionate person will take note of the needy persons he encounters, and if he does not encounter any, he will seek them out.

#### *The Effects or Fruits of Compassion*

The *effects or fruits* of compassion are *a being charitable and a rendering of assistance*. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). It consists in:

- (1) Providing shelter for the poor who are homeless—especially those of the household of faith: “Is it not to ... bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?” (Isa 58:7).
- (2) Feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry? ... and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul” Isa 58:7,10.

(3) Clothing the naked: "... when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isa 58:7).

(4) Visiting the sick who are poor, offering them monetary assistance, or refreshing them with some delightful food. The Lord Jesus visited the sick in Bethesda John 5:5-6, and the mother of Peter's wife who was in bed with a high fever (Luke 4:38-39). Consider furthermore the comprehensive listing of the works of compassion in (Matt 25:35). Thus generosity manifests itself in being generous.

This is the virtue which God's Word so frequently commands us to practice. Therefore, impress this upon your heart. "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth" (Deut 15:7-8). Compassion is not only to be exercised when someone has come into extreme poverty, but also when someone is still able to stay afloat; that is, if there is some probability that he can earn his living. If he is in need of some goods or merchandise, it is an act of compassion if we provide a generous loan (if we have the means to do so) to such a person—be it that he returns this when he is able to; that he can never pay it back; that he can pay interest; or that neither payment for the interest nor the principal is to be expected. The Lord Jesus commands us to do this: "Lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luke 6:35). Add to this the following passage: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic 6:8). All godliness is comprehended in this: To humbly walk with God, and not only to be righteous and compassionate toward our neighbor, but also to have love for, find delight in, seek, and be desirous to give expression to these virtues. Add to this the following passages: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted" (Eph 4:32); "But to do good and to communicate forget not" (Heb 13:16). Apply this to yourself as having been said to you. Is it not therefore true that benevolence is your duty?

#### *The Need for Self-Examination*

Now turn within and observe yourself in the mirror we have held before you in delineating the nature of compassion. Do you belong to the compassionate? Is there compassion in your heart flowing forth out of union with the Lord Jesus, having become a partaker of His loving nature by faith? Are there motions of sympathy, mercy, and compassion to be found within you toward

outcasts, the poor in general—and particularly toward those who hate and evil entreat you? Are you mostly compassionate toward the godly and the members of the household of faith? Do you take their misery to heart? Do you seek them out, and do you focus upon their need so that you might be moved by it and become willing and zealous to help them? Do you provide shelter for the poor who are homeless, feed the hungry, clothe the naked? Do you visit and encourage those among the sick who are poor? Do you help and support those who have come to their wit's end, and do you lend to them without hoping for something in return? What are your answers upon these questions? If you must answer negatively, be convinced that you are not among the merciful and the compassionate. There are various types among those who are void of compassion.

### *Persons Void of Compassion Identified*

First, there are people without natural love—and thus also without compassion. They are cruel and have nearly rid themselves of all humaneness. They gather and scrape together for themselves as much as they can, and they cling to that which they possess with all their might. No one may benefit from this, and they say with Nabal: “Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh ... and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” (1 Sam 25:11). They are neither concerned about the poor, nor are they inwardly moved by their condition. If they see someone in need, they will pass him by as the priest and Levite did.

Secondly, there are people who fear that they might be moved to give something, and thus they avoid such opportunities. They turn their heads, close their doors, or walk away when they see someone in need. They already “smell” from a distance if someone visits them to plead the cause of a poor person. They will change the subject of the conversation, and their heart becomes averse to such pleas for help.

Thirdly, there are people who are indeed moved with compassion, but who do not like to give. Therefore they pacify themselves and harden their hearts; they do violence to themselves so that they do not have to give, and dismiss the poor with a friendly word. James speaks of such: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15-16). They will look for some reasons whereby they may pacify

themselves and excuse themselves before others who request something from them. They reason as follows:

(1) I need this for myself and my loved ones.

(2) There is so much to be contributed for various taxes and other causes.

(3) There are so many poor people; I cannot help them all. Thus, they do not help anyone.

(4) I do not know whether my gift will be used properly, for there are so many dishonest people. They will drink away or waste in gluttony what I have worked for and have saved. I have been deceived so many times that I no longer can have any compassion for the poor.

(5) I make my contribution to the deacons who have been appointed to care for the poor.

(6) I have remembered the poor in my will. Upon my death they will receive such and such an amount from me. Such are just like hogs who are useless during their life but are beneficial after their death.

(7) When I am in better circumstances and have a bit more leeway, I shall give. Then the poor will benefit, for I have indeed a good inclination toward being compassionate.

By these and similar arguments they will pacify themselves, and this culminates in not giving at all.

Fourthly, there are others who indeed do give but whose compassion is not of the right sort.

(1) Some give out of a sense of shame and dare not refrain from giving. They do so by compulsion, however, and it is as if, so to speak, it were forcefully pressed from their heart. While giving with their hand, there is an evil inclination in their heart.

(2) Some give in order to be honored and praised by men. They would like to blow the trumpet when they are about to give something to the poor so that everyone will know it. And, in order that it may be known that they are generous, they will bring up the matter in conversation and frequently pretend to have given ten times more than is really the case.

(3) Some spend money indiscriminately and disperse it randomly, without being moved by any inner motions of love and compassion. The poor do indeed receive something, but such giving is not a giving of alms.

### *Misers Rebuked*

Come, you misers who are void of compassion, hear what God has to say about you and toward you. May it be a means to your conversion.

First, you are thieves and murderers. You are thieves, for God has given you all that you have. He has not only given this to you personally, but He has done so with the express command that this be shared with the poor according to your ability. If you therefore keep this for yourself, you are robbing the poor to whom this ordinance pertains and toward whom you are financially obliged. You are also murderers, not only due to the cruelty which is implicit in your lack of compassion, but also because you are responsible for the poor perishing for hunger and lack of shelter. If their lives are preserved, this is not because of your doings, but rather due to the efforts of others who help them. Be it known, however, that thieves and murderers will not inherit the kingdom of heaven—and this therefore also applies to you.

Secondly, you are numbered among the most ungodly and abominable sinners. You know that Sodom and all its inhabitants—parents and children—were consumed by God with fire which fell from heaven, and that God has made these cities to be an example to those who live ungodly lives (2 Pet 2:6). What did their ungodliness consist of, however? It was lack of compassion for the poor—the sin in which you are living. “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezek 16:49). This you also do not do, and therefore you are like her; since your sin is of the same sort, your punishment will also be like hers.

Thirdly, do not imagine that you have faith and love for God in your heart, for if that were so, you would also be compassionate and generous—particularly to the poor among the godly. Where compassion is absent, faith is absent. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone ... show me thy faith without thy works” (James 2:17-18). Where compassion is absent, the love of God is absent. “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

Fourthly, all your religion is vain—even your fasting and praying. God is neither pleased with it nor will He hear your prayers. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27). The Jews were very religious, sought God daily, greatly desired the knowledge of His ways, fasted often, and yet complained that God did not hear them (Isa 58:5-3). God revealed, however, that He was not pleased with them, as they were neither compassionate nor benevolent toward the poor. “Is it such a fast that I have chosen?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Isa 58:5,7. Do you complain that God neither helps you nor hears your prayer? It is no wonder, for you do not hear the cry of the poor. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Prov 21:13).

Fifthly, the judgments and curses of God—both temporal and eternal—will come upon the merciless. The Lord curses them and their goods, and it may be that even in this life they will be reduced to a piece of bread, experience that their children will have to beg, and be glad that there are shelters, orphanages, and boarding houses for the poor. And even if all this does not come upon them in this life, it will come upon them eternally. How frightful it will be to hear this dreadful sentence in the last day when the Lord Jesus will say unto them, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not" Matt 25:41-43! Take note of this; do not delude yourself by fostering expectations about yourself that all is well. Jesus, who is truth Himself, is saying this. Or do you think that in the day of judgment Jesus will say, "You have done all this," while yet you have not done it? "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13).

### *Believers Exhorted to be Compassionate*

And you, believers—in whom the principle of compassion is indeed to be found—can observe from that which has been said how much is yet lacking as far as the manifestation of your compassionate nature is concerned; what an abominable sin it is to be without mercy and not to exercise compassion; and what you are consequently deserving of. May it cause you to be ashamed before God, to be deeply humbled, and to abhor yourself; and may it be accompanied with a joyous and grateful acknowledgement that the Lord Jesus has also removed these sins by His blood. May the mercy of God move you henceforth to exercise more compassion.

Therefore, you who are godly, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy" (Hos 10:12); "Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" (Hos 12:6). In order to stir you up more to this end, give heed to the following matters with an obedient heart.

First, precepts teach, but examples attract. Therefore, observe those compassionate persons who have gone before you, and have left you an example. The most perfect example is the Lord Jesus, whom you ought to follow joyfully and willingly, since He is altogether lovely to you. Read only the history of His life, the gospels, and you will perceive that all His footsteps were nothing but mercy. Time and again you will read: “Jesus being moved with compassion ...” He was not merely moved, however, but His compassion culminated in deeds. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, gave the oppressed their dead again, and traversed the entire country doing good. In doing so He has left us an example, so that we would follow in His footsteps. Therefore, out of love for Him, conduct yourself as He did. Your name “Christian” also obligates you to this.

Furthermore, add to this the example of Job. Who can read about his compassion without being moved to follow his example? “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor” (Job 29:15-16); “If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep” (Job 31:16-20). That was exemplary.

Add to the example of this man the example of a compassionate woman: *Tabitha or Dorcas*. Observe the following of her: “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did ... and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:36,39). She was a mother to the poor! She did not occasionally do a good deed, but rather she was full of, and overflowing with, good works and alms (gifts which are the manifestation of compassion). The Greek word εὐλεμοσύνη (*elémósúne*) is a composite word and a derivative of εὐλεεῖν (*eleéō*), which means *to have compassion*. Thus, she did not only give, but rather she gave, being moved with compassion. First the heart was moved, and the heart thus moved, in turn moved her hand. She did not only buy material from which she made clothing, but her benevolent love was so great that it was her delight to do the sewing herself and to dress the widows with the work of her own hands.

Secondly, compassion is most pleasing to God and man. God loves such persons and is pleased with their doings: “God loveth a

cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7); “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). If you desire to be loved by God and to experience His love, and if you furthermore desire to please God, let your heart and hand be compassionate. People have esteem and love for those who are generous and will bless them in their heart. Furthermore, the giver experiences more joy than the one who receives the gift.

Thirdly, the poor and their needs are very powerful motives to stir up a compassionate heart. When you observe a godly person who is poor, consider that God loves him, that the Lord Jesus has died out of love for him, that he lives in the enjoyment of the communion and love of God, and that he will eternally live in glory with you. Consider furthermore that it pleases the Lord to keep him poor in this life, and causes him to meet you so that you may have the opportunity to exercise love and compassion (even though God does not need your gift, can quickly make the poor person rich, or support him without your help). In addition, consider how distressed he is in his house, how he observes his children with sorrow, how his heart breaks when he witnesses the hunger and nakedness of his children, and how he cries to God for help. If you consider all this, it will not be possible for your heart to remain unmoved if there is but the least principle of life there. Rather, all that is within you will be moved to compassion and your hand will open itself to be generous.

Fourthly, compassion glorifies God, for when a godly poor person, having been helped by you, goes to his hut, and there rejoices before the face of the Lord, thanks God, praises His mercy, is stirred up to put his trust in God, and prays to God that He might pour out a blessing upon you according to soul and body—how can one consider all that and not have a vehement desire to be compassionate? Furthermore, (even though you do not do this to be seen of men, and may not refrain from doing so simply because it may come to the people’s knowledge) your light will break through, for nowhere is love more apparent than in the manifestation of benevolence. The godly will see it, glorify and thank God for it, and will be stirred up to emulate you. It will be a means whereby others will be drawn to the truth and to repentance. If, therefore, it is your desire that God be glorified, thanked, praised; that the godly rejoice in the Lord and be stirred up toward compassion which in turn will cause other poor persons to rejoice in God; that God be thanked by many; and that the unconverted be led to the Lord Jesus—if you desire this, then exercise compassion: “Let your

light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Fifthly, God makes eminent promises to those who are compassionate.

(1) God reckons it as having been done toward Him, since it was done out of love toward Him; He will richly reward the gift made to Him. Although believers have enough with the virtue itself, and are motivated more thereby than the reward, they must nevertheless permit themselves to be stirred up by this, as it pleases God to stir them up by means of promises. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again” (Prov 19:17); “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matt 25:40).

(2) The reward will be incomparably greater than your insignificant gift: “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water ... verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matt 10:42); “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom” (Luke 6:38); “He which soweth bountifully (*that is, consistently and joyfully*) shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6).

(3) You need not fear that your genuine generosity will cause you and your children to become poor. If you believe that you will nevertheless be taking something from them, consider that God will bless you again in response to your generosity. If this does not occur in the manner in which you thought it would come to pass, it will transpire in a different manner: “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack” (Prov 28:27); “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed” (Ps 37:25-26).

(4) The Lord will help the compassionate person when he experiences days of distress and becomes sick. “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he will be blessed upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Ps 41:1-3).

(5) Since true compassion is a fruit of faith and love, eternal glory is promised to compassionate persons. “That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:18-19);

“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13-14).

Oh, how glorious and delightful it will be in the day of judgment to hear this lovely voice: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in” (Matt 25:34-35). When such compassionate persons, having done good to those poor among the godly who have died before them, will subsequently die and arrive in heaven, then the poor who have been the recipients of their benevolence will welcome them in heaven. “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness (*that is, the riches which some people receive unrighteously and use unrighteously*); that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations” (Luke 16:9).

#### *Guidelines for Manifesting Compassion*

Having been moved to be compassionate, it is therefore needful that you conduct yourself wisely in exercising compassion. To that end the following needs to be noted:

First, the persons who are to be compassionate are the rich, people of moderate means, people of limited means, as well as the poor—no one is excluded. Everyone must inwardly be moved toward compassion, which is to be accompanied by a ready inclination to render assistance. The gift varies, however; the one gives much, the other less, and another little. Each is to give according to his means and consistent with the authority he has over certain possessions. Someone who is subordinate to no one gives in a certain way, and someone who is married, having children, in a different manner. Children may give of that which their parents give them to buy something nice or delectable. They either save it fully or partially, giving that which they have saved with a generous heart to the poor. This is pleasing to both God and man. Married persons must each give alms individually without informing each other about this. One may not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. It may, however, not be to the detriment of the family. Instead, one should eat a little bit less, make one less garment, or wear a certain garment a bit longer so that the routine of the family is maintained. If, however, a greater measure needs to be given, this needs to be discussed mutually. If no agreement can be reached, the gift must either not be made at all, or it must

be reduced until the resistant party agrees. If the one party is as Nabal, the other party must give in the manner stated. In these matters the husband has more authority than the wife. He who cannot share any goods must render assistance to whomever is in need, and he who cannot even do this must pray with a compassionate heart that the Lord may help the poor.

Secondly, the persons to whom we must be generous are first of all the godly—and then the unconverted among the citizenry, as well as widows, orphans, and the homeless. We must particularly be generous to those who are in exile, or those who must flee for the sake of true religion. The common vagrants are generally rogues who would be better off in a house of correction than on the street. If they are healthy, hunger may perhaps teach them how to work; or if they are invalids, we are obligated to give them a piece of bread.

Thirdly, the gift must proceed from that which is ours and be given in a righteous manner. To give liberally while being deeply in debt is theft. It is an abomination before God to give a portion to the poor from that which we have obtained through unrighteous means or by way of gambling, doing so to quiet the conscience somewhat or to atone for one's wrongdoing. This is no more pleasing to God than "the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog" Deut 23:18, God forbidding that such funds would come into the treasury.

Fourthly, the manner in which alms are to be given is:

(1) With a simple heart: "... he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity" (Rom 12:8). Thus, this is to be done with a truly compassionate heart, a gentle hand, and without seeking one's own honor, so that the engagement of the heart and hand, as well as the objective, be in harmony with and characterized by sincerity.

(2) Joyfully: "... he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom 12:8); "... not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). This means that we shall rejoice in having such a good opportunity, and therefore shall engage ourselves toward the poor with a happy and friendly countenance. The giving of our alms will then be doubly delightful.

(3) Wisely; that is, in respect to ourselves, in a manner in which we neither give everything away at once, nor shortchange our family. Rather, we are to give in such a manner that we shall be able to continue to give. However, in extraordinary times something extraordinary needs to be done. Wisdom must also be exercised as far as the persons are concerned to whom we give. Some of the poor do not manage their affairs well and are not diligent

enough. Such need to be taught to be prudent by way of an exhortation or a rebuke. It is better to hire them and teach them to work; they will thus earn what we otherwise would have given them. It is to no purpose to give others money, for they either cannot save well, or they have so many debts that they are immediately without money again, and thus will remain equally poor. In such cases it is sometimes the most prudent course of action to allow them go to the baker once a week to get some bread, and to the grocer for a weekly quantity of grits, flour, peas, and butter. Here we must make a distinction between poor and poor. Some are too proud to admit poverty and nevertheless suffer want. However, for such we can become surety by giving them money so that they can pay their incurred debts. For others we may have them obtain the goods while paying for them ourselves. We are to proceed in like manner as far as clothing is concerned. The most prudent approach is to personally buy strong linen and wool, have the clothing made, and then forward it. This will be much more efficient.

(4) We are to be steadfast in our generosity. We must not do so in a rush which immediately dissipates, while it all ends in remorse over having given so much. Our giving must always be commensurate with the present need, doing so in accordance with our circumstances, and without it being detrimental to our own situation. We must not be weary in well-doing, for compassion culminates in receiving the crown. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt 5:7).



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 CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT
 

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## Prudence

What a rudder is to a ship, prudence is to the exercise of those virtues we have thus far discussed. Therefore, as a conclusion, we wish to append a consideration of prudence.

In Hebrew we have the word *τῶζξ* (*chazuth*), which means *a vision*, and is derived from *ηζη* (*chazah*), which means *to see*. From this is derived the word *ηζη* (*choze*), which means *a seer* or *a prophet*. This word is used, because the prudent person is someone who sees everything in advance, notices everything in advance, and governs his actions accordingly. In Greek we have *φρονοια* (*phronoia*), *φρονησις* (*phronesis*), which is derived from *φρην* (*phreen*), meaning *understanding, wisdom*. From this is derived *φρονεω* (*phroneo*), which means *to understand, to think, to consider, to conclude, and to care for*. Thus the word *prudence* is expressive of the *consideration* of a matter. This consideration relates to the end as well as the means, which in turn yields the determination to carry out this matter by way of those means, while seeing to it that all is properly executed in doing so. Also the word *ακριβεια* (*akribeia*) is used, which is indicative of a diligence characterized by neatness and excellence. “See then that ye walk circumspectly (*ακριβως*, *akribos*)” (Eph 5:15). In our language this is indicative of seeing ahead. We shall deal with this virtue comprehensively, that is, including both *wisdom and discretion*.

Prudence is the exertion of the believer’s intellect, which governs him in accomplishing his intended objective by the premeditated use of suitable means.

Prudence is only to be found in the *believing* children of God. The unconverted have a civil prudence by which they take care of earthly and worldly affairs. This is beneficial for the welfare of a given commonwealth, and profitable in its context—that is, as far

as its effects are concerned. It has, however, no effect upon the present and future well-being of the soul. Rather, it is generally detrimental to the soul. It is the prudence of those who are careful to gain a nickel and in the meantime neglect a ton of gold and suffer harm. Therefore the Scriptures call them fools. “But God said unto him, Thou fool” (Luke 12:20); “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom 1:22); “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19).

The unconverted are indeed cunning and subtle in carrying out their evil designs: “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8); “... by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14). Yet in all of this not a trace of true prudence is to be found. However, believers have received “wisdom that is from above” James 3:17, and “the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17). They are therefore called “wise virgins” Matt 25:2, and “wise servants” Matt 24:45, for they are acquainted with the nature of true felicity and hold this before them as their objective. They are acquainted with the true way and appropriate means; and they enter upon that way and make use of those means.

### *The Object and Nature of Prudence*

The *object* of this virtue is *the objective pursued and the means used in pursuing that objective*. The objective which the prudent person has in view is manifold: to enjoy and glorify God; to have peace and joy in God; and love toward God; to exercise holiness; to refrain from sin; to practice a given virtue; to be instrumental in the conversion of one’s neighbor; and to restore one who has gone astray and is backslidden, doing so by way of rebuke, exhortation, and words of comfort. In one word, he has in view all that God commands in His law. The prudent person also makes active use of the means. He considers the *time*, when it is best either to avoid or execute certain things. Furthermore, he considers *the place, the company and the people* among whom he finds himself, *the situations* as they occur, *the manner* in which something can best be carried out, and *the matters themselves*—considering what is either advantageous or disadvantageous. He delights in his ultimate objective and is therefore averse to delay. He contemplates what is to be done now, what is to be done later, and what will be the best approach. Having determined both the end and the means, he resolves to execute them in that certain manner, and focuses upon that resolution—as a carpenter looks to his blueprint—so that he may conduct himself accordingly.

The nature of prudence consists in the *government* of the intellect, will, affections, vision, speech, mobility, and activities, so that the designated means may be used properly and the objective determined may thus be achieved. Prudence governs *the intellect* and causes it to be focused upon those matters which either ought or ought not to be done—upon that which is either good or evil, pleasing or displeasing to God, advantageous or injurious, as well as whether or not the objective being pursued is lawful and untainted. It focuses upon *the means*, as to whether they are either suitable or unsuitable, and whether either beneficial or detrimental. It also focuses upon *the manner of conduct*, that is, whether it would be best to be either harsh or gentle, hasty or cautious, silent or vocal. A prudent person is neither blind, evil, nor foolish, but rather astute and wise. He endeavors to examine every matter and each means thoroughly and from every perspective, ascertaining whether all is according to the rule of God's Word. This is the only rule according to which he functions; neither pleasant nor grievous circumstances can cause him to deviate therefrom. When the intellect perceives how desirable and beneficial a given matter is, and the appropriateness of the way and the means, prudence will also direct the will to love and embrace a given matter, even if it were not agreeable with our natural interest and delight. Prudence also governs the affections so that they will not run ahead, and thus neither be too subdued nor too vehement, as they are very often ruinous to a good work. When all within is in order, prudence preserves the soul in this condition, and she in turn begins to carry out her intention by the means ordained to that end. The prudent person will anticipate opposition and will arm himself against this accordingly. He will deal with the dangers at hand and control his countenance, eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet, so that they all render him fit to carry out his intent. He will see to it that he is neither too stern nor too gentle; neither too overbearing nor too timid; neither too modest nor too exuberant—but that all things may be in accordance with the objects at hand, the time, and the place, doing so steadfastly until the matter has been carried out. Such self-control adorns the person thus engaged, renders the activity itself desirable, and causes the goal to be achieved—in spite of the magnitude of the opposition and the craftiness of the opponents. Prudence does not cause the task at hand to be neglected, but it directs in the accomplishment of it.

#### *The Moving Cause of Prudence*

The *moving cause* of prudence is God alone. By nature man is

*foolish* Titus 3:3 and *heady*<sup>8</sup> (2 Tim 3:4). However, the Lord grants His children prudent wisdom: “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:21). David was desirous for this virtue. Perceiving his foolishness, however, and knowing that the Lord alone grants this wisdom, he prayed: “Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments” (Ps 119:73).

A godly person improves this infused virtue:

(1) By means of God’s Word, doing so not only by searching it, but also by doing it. “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts” (Ps 119:100); “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments” (Ps 119:6).

(2) By thoughtfully considering a matter before undertaking it. “With the well advised is wisdom” Prov 13:10, and by proceeding thoughtfully as he engages in the task. “For my mouth shall speak truth” (Prov 8:7).

(3) By way of experience; that is, by giving heed to and remembering that in which one failed and wherein one succeeded. If such a task is to be undertaken again, then (by reason of previous experience) he will avoid the one thing and do the other.

(4) By consulting others in important matters. Good counsel will thus be given to us, or it may occur that a good solution will dawn upon us. “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established” (Prov 15:22). It is in this manner that the prudent person carries out his task.

### *Prudence Highly Exalted in Scripture*

Prudence is a great virtue which is greatly praised and highly recommended in the Word of God, and is given as an extraordinary gift to God’s children. It is praised as being an exceptional ornament: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt 7:24); “Who then is a faithful and wise servant ... blessed is that servant. ... Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods” (Matt 24:45-47); “But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps ... and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage” (Matt 25:4-10). It is most earnestly recommended: “Be ye therefore wise as serpents” (Matt 10:16); “See then that ye walk circumspectly” (Eph 5:15); “That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate ... that they may teach the

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<sup>8</sup> Statenvertaling: roekeloos, that is, reckless.

young women to be sober” (Titus 2:2-4). It is given as an extraordinary gift to God’s children: “And He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17); “Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Eph 1:8).

### *A Call to Self-Examination*

The foregoing is a suitable mirror to convince the unconverted and converted of their want or great deficiency in this matter.

*You who are unconverted* will be able to see clearly from that which has been said

(1) That you do not even have an eye upon the spiritual benefits mentioned above. Do you desire to have communion with God, to have joy and peace in God, to have a tender heart, to preserve spiritual peace within the heart, and live as such? Do you have a desire for genuine holiness and to exercise all manner of virtues in a spiritual manner? Do you fear sin? Is it your desire to shine forth as a light in the darkness and to be an ornament in the church? You are convinced, are you not, that this is not your most desirable objective, and that you are not pursuing this as your goal? Therefore, you have no use for spiritual prudence, nor have any need for it; you neither possess it nor seek after it.

(2) That you are fools when viewing yourself in light of this virtue. Many of you have not even progressed as far as the foolish virgins who joined themselves to the wise virgins, were desirous to enter with the bridegroom, and at least had lamps. Others are just like them: They go to church and have a hope concerning salvation; however, they have no oil—they neither have life nor faith. They are not concerned about this, but neglect their time, are drowsy and careless, and awake when it is too late. You must therefore perceive that you must number yourself among the foolish virgins, and that you are as the foolish builder who built his house upon the sand (Matt 7:26).

(3) That instead of being prudent, you are foolish and crude, ignorant of the happiness to be attained and of the danger you are in—to perish forever—and that you rush toward this so foolishly. Solomon speaks of such persons: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Prov 22:3).

(4) That perhaps you have nothing but carnal wisdom. You are crafty and trust in your wisdom as Solomon’s fool did. “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov 28:26); “Seest thou a man

wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov 26:12). You use all your prudence to indulge in your wicked and sinful lusts and belong to that people of whom Jeremiah speaks: “They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer 4:22). You ought thus to be convinced that you despise that which is precious, and choose and pursue that which is evil; you reject eternal felicity, and the perfect and delightful way which leads to this—entering instead upon a way which is full of thorns and ending in the pool of damnation. You ought thus to perceive that you are not prudent, but are a great fool. “A fool hath no delight in understanding” (Prov 18:2); “Wisdom is too high for a fool” (Prov 24:7).

Oh, that you would awaken upon hearing my voice and see how imprudent you are in so great a matter! For if you continue to proceed thus, you will be caught in the snare of your foolishness, and your end will be as the end of the fool who built his house upon the sand (Matt 7:26). You will experience what the foolish virgins experienced who found the door to be shut when they wanted to enter (Matt 25:12). Then you will see how foolish you have been and how prudently the godly have conducted themselves. You will then agree with the fools who speak as follows in the apocryphal book of Wisdom:

This was he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us (Wisdom 5:3-6).

#### *The Deficient Prudence of the Godly*

The exposition of prudence is also meant to be a mirror for the *godly* who are indeed wise virgins, having chosen the best portion. If, however, they examine themselves in light of what we have presented concerning prudence, how they then ought to be convinced that they are very imprudent!

(1) They are so lukewarm toward that which they have chosen as their portion, these matters being so remote and obscure, and their love for them being so faint.

(2) Their fear for vices is also lukewarm.

(3) They give no heed to the enemies who lie in wait to take advantage of them.

(4) They bring themselves so recklessly into all manner of situations and thus fall into sin—of which they have many a grievous experience.

How imprudent they are in lending their eyes and ears for that which wounds their soul! How imprudent they are in their speaking, whereby their heart is troubled and others are offended! They still have so much carnal prudence. For fear of injury and shame, they so readily refrain from doing their duty and that which is good. And this they would like to be considered as prudence. They rush into everything ill-advisedly as long as it is but a good matter they are pursuing, paying little attention to their state, calling, location, the persons involved, and their manner of conduct—acting as if being rash were a virtue. In reality, however, this zeal proceeds from a secret desire for gaining one's own way and honor.

Acknowledge your imprudence, and bring about improvement.

(1) Imprudence injures your soul. How much trouble and what great grief has this already caused you! All the delight and encouragement which you could have derived from having engaged yourself prudently has vanished, and grief has come in its place.

(2) You spoil the good of your undertaking, and it neither edifies nor has the effect which otherwise it would have had.

(3) Moreover, the wicked immediately attack you because of your imprudence and thus slander your work, yourself, and even the way of godliness itself. Therefore, regret your imprudence, and confess it as much as you confess other sins. Reflect upon it for some time so that your perception of the foolishness and harm of your imprudence may deeply penetrate your heart. You will thus learn to be prudent.

### *The Godly Exhorted*

Therefore, you who are godly, lift up your soul and make every effort to let all your conduct be governed by prudence.

First, it is a delightful ornament—an ornament which only God's children have. It is "the wisdom of the just" (Luke 1:17). It is a characteristic exclusive to the saints: "The knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov 9:10). It is the image of the Lord Jesus upon whom rests "the spirit of wisdom and ... of knowledge" (Isa 11:2). Do you not care for prudence? Is it not beautiful in your eyes? Do you not esteem a godly person who conducts himself prudently in all things above all the honorable of the earth? Is it not your inmost desire to be conformed to Jesus? "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov 4:7).

Secondly, prudence is an absolute necessity, for you are surrounded by your enemies, the devil is crafty, the world is deceptive, and the flesh tempts in a most subtle manner. You must either

give up and let these enemies rule over you, or, if you wish to preserve your life, peace, and godliness, you must be on guard, prudently avoiding the snares which have been laid for you, and prudently carrying out that which the Lord has commanded you to do. “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16).

Thirdly, prudence will cause you to grow and to progress from grace to grace. “The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city” Eccles 7:12,19. Prudence will cause you to distrust your wisdom and strength, depend on the Lord continually, and proceed in taking hold of His strength and be engaged accordingly. This will give you sweet peace and joy, and it will time and again give you new strength.

Fourthly, it will cause your endeavors to be prosperous, and your speaking, conduct, and silence will be enhanced. The unconverted will not have an effect on you and they will be inwardly convicted. The godly will learn to be prudent by your example; and your counsel, instruction, rebukes, exhortations, and comforting words will be much more effective. Therefore, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt (that is, with wisdom), that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col 4:6).

I am certain that a godly person who reads this will be enamored with prudence, but at the same time will grieve, not knowing how to achieve this, being immediately convicted of his very imprudent actions which have spoiled his endeavors hitherto. Such ought to know, however, that God does not grant His sanctifying grace all at one time, for He wills that we shall increase by way of strife. Therefore, be not discouraged, for you will learn while thus engaged. Instead, give heed to my advice and follow it.

First, pray for this, believing that God will hear your prayer, that your desire is pleasing to Him, that He is mighty to give this to you, and that according to His promise He will answer your prayer at that time and in that measure as it pleases Him to do in His wisdom. While thus persevering, you will time and again receive a greater measure. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith” (James 1:5-6).

Secondly, apply yourself with much zeal and diligence. Focus upon this virtue, love it, continually hold it before you, be active in learning how to be prudent, and be exercised as such in your speaking and conduct. If you have failed, do not be discouraged, but courageously strive to improve matters time and again. While

thus engaged, you will receive more and more of this virtue. “So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures. ... When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man” Prov 2:2-4,10-12.

Thirdly, do the following:

- (1) Never go beyond the boundaries of your calling, or else you will fall.
- (2) Deny yourself and forsake all honor, love, and profit. Failure to deny self will lead you into the snare of imprudence before you know it.
- (3) Have much fellowship with prudent people and observe how this virtue functions in them.
- (4) In matters which you intend to undertake or to which you are called, always seek counsel with the Lord Jesus, whose name is Counselor, as well as from the Word of God, searching whether there is either a rule or an example which can shed light over it. If you have a bosom friend, consult him and it will be a blessing to you.
- (5) Always keep your objective in view, and be prepared for it that your enemies are lying in wait. Let David’s prayer be found in your heart: “Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness” (Ps 143:10); “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Ps 141:3). Amen.



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## CHAPTER EIGHTY-NINE

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### Spiritual Growth

God has assigned to each creature his station and measure of perfection, having created in each creature the inclination to be in that station and to strive for perfection. Heavy objects have a downward inclination, whereas fire is inclined to go upward, and the sparks of fire rise upward to float away. A fish seeks out the water, a bird chooses the air, and other animals seek out dry ground. As soon as a seed germinates, the plant will not rest until it has attained its proper height and size. As soon as a living creature is born, it will seek for food in order that he might grow. This is also true for spiritual life. As soon as a believer has been regenerated, he will be dissatisfied with the feeble measure of grace he possesses, and will at once be desirous to grow—yes, would desire to be perfect at once. This is so typical for a believer, that whoever does not have this smarting desire is no true believer.

Our attempt to understand the essence of a given matter will be in vain if we do not first of all know what this essence is. Therefore, we shall 1) show that growth is common to all believers, 2) show what the nature of spiritual growth is, 3) call man to examine himself to ascertain whether he is growing or not, 4) subsequently exhort everyone to strive for growth, 5) warn for obstacles which impede one's growth, and 6) identify those means which are subservient unto growth.

#### *Natural to All Believers*

That it is natural for a believer to grow—a truth which is to be impressed upon your heart—is evident for the following reasons:

First, God promises that He will cause His regenerated children to grow. “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall

flourish in the courts of our God” (Ps 92:13); “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon” (Hos 14:5-6); “Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal 4:2). God’s promises are in truth, and He who has declared them will also perform them. Let the godly person remind the Lord of this.

Secondly, it is the very nature of spiritual life to grow. Wherever the principle of this life is to be found, it can be no different for it must grow. “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov 4:18); “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9). This refers to the children of God, who are compared to palm and cedar trees (Ps 92:12). As natural as it is for children and trees to grow, so natural is growth for the regenerated children of God.

Thirdly, the growth of His children is the goal and objective God has in view by administering the means of grace to them. “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints ... that we henceforth be no more children ... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head” (Eph 4:11-15). This is also to be observed in 1 Pet 2:2: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” God will reach His goal and His Word will not return to Him void; thus God’s children will grow in grace.

Fourthly, it is a duty to which God’s children are continually exhorted, and their activity is to consist in a striving for growth. That it is their duty is to be observed in the following passages: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18); “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev 22:11). The nature of this activity is expressed as follows: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after” (Phil 3:12). If it were not necessary for believers to grow, the exhortations to that end would be in vain.

Fifthly, this is also conveyed by the difference in believers in regard to their condition and the measure of grace. In the church there are children, young men, and fathers. “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13). It is in grace as it is in nature: first a child,

then a young man, and after that a father. All this proves it to be a certainty that it is neither the mere duty nor that it would be merely a good thing for the godly to grow, but it is their nature. Thus, those who do not manifest any growth are not believers. Hereby the unconverted ought immediately to be convinced that as yet it is not well with them. Furthermore, this can, first of all, be of comfort to God's children regarding the grace they possess, and they can already in the beginning be stirred up to strive for spiritual growth.

#### *A Gracious Work of God*

*Spiritual growth is a gracious work of God in the regenerate whereby they increase in both habitual and actual grace.*

Spiritual growth is a *work of God*. The spiritual life of the regenerate proceeds from God, who has caused them to be regenerated according to His will. The preservation of that spiritual life in them is also from God, who, by His power, preserves them by faith unto salvation. If that were not so, they would lose it a thousand times in one day. Likewise the increase and growth of spiritual life also proceed from God. Believers, by reason of the spiritual life within them, cannot of themselves bring about anything unless this were at all times joined by the preceding, cooperating, and pursuant power of the Holy Spirit. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do" (Phil 2:13). The persons referred to here are already regenerate, and yet these words are said of them. Since it is God who grants, preserves, and activates life, it is likewise He alone who causes life to increase. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish" (Ps 92:13); "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (Isa 40:29). The disciples therefore prayed, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

The Lord causes spiritual life to grow by *granting an increased measure of His Spirit*. The water which Ezekiel witnessed coming out of the sanctuary, continually *increased*. First it came to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the loins, and after that it could not be passed over (Ezek 47:1-5). Elisha desired a *double portion* of the spirit of Elijah and received it (2 Kings 2:9). On the day of Pentecost the apostles were *filled* with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4). As God, in the realm of nature, causes trees and herbs to grow by way of rain and sunshine, He likewise does so in spiritual life. He does so by means of:

- (1) the *Word*, that is, the sincere milk (1 Pet 2:2);
- (2) prayer (Ezek 36:26-27,37);
- (3) providing us with examples of those who have a greater

measure of the Spirit, whereby we may perceive that there is more to be had than we personally possess, and whereby we are thus stirred up to emulate them (Phil 3:17);

(4) trials and tribulations (2 Cor 4:17);

(5) prosperity, physical (Acts 3:8) as well as spiritual (Neh 8:11).

### *Peculiar to the Regenerate Only*

Those who grow are the *regenerate*. That which does not exist can neither be increased nor decreased. Growth presupposes the presence of life. Some die shortly after having been regenerated—such as the thief on the cross and others who are converted upon their deathbed. The life such persons have received has the propensity toward growth, but lacks time, and it is at once made perfect.

*Some grow rapidly* and are “as plants grown up in their youth” (Ps 144:12). They grow by the day, so that everyone observes it and is amazed. However, the Lord will occasionally take such away after a short season, and for them it is true what is written in the apocryphal book of Wisdom:

But though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest. For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. He pleased God, and was beloved of Him: so that living among sinners he was translated. Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of naughtiness doth obscure things that are honest; and the wandering of concupiscence doth undermine the simple mind. He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased the Lord: therefore hastened He to take him away from among the wicked (Wisdom 4:7-14).

*Some remain small*; they do grow somewhat, but do not make much progress. Also in nature all men are not equally tall; there are giants, men of medium height, and dwarfs. This is also the case here. Some remain feeble, having but little life and strength. This can be due to a lack of nourishment, living under a barren ministry, or being without guidance. It can also be that they naturally have a slow mind and a lazy disposition; that they have strong corruptions which draw them away; that they are without much strife; that they are too busy from early morning till late evening, due to heavy labor, or to having a family with many children, and thus must struggle or are poverty-stricken. Furthermore, it can be that they either do not have the opportunity to converse with the godly; that they do not avail themselves of such opportunities; or that they are lazy as far as reading in God’s Word and prayer are

concerned. Such persons are generally subject to many ups and downs. At one time they lift up their heads out of all their troubles, by renewal becoming serious, and they seek God with their whole heart. It does not take long, however, and they are quickly cast down in despondency—or their lusts gain the upper hand. Thus they remain feeble and are, so to speak, continually on the verge of death. Some of them occasionally make good progress, but then grieve the Spirit of God and backslide rapidly. For some this lasts for a season, after which they are restored, but others are as those who suffer from consumption—they languish until they die. Oh, what a sad condition this is!

*Some progress steadily*—which is not to imply that they have no opposition. It occurs only rarely that someone increases in strength by a wise conduct relative to the truth; and, without much strife and many comforts. Rather, they generally increase in the way of strife, since vigilance is present; and by the exercise of faith, fasting, prayer, reading, spiritual fellowship, the sharing of their gifts and graces with others, they overcome everything and proceed in the strength of the Lord Jehovah. They are those who from children become young men and then men and fathers in Christ. Since, however, such differ greatly as far as strife, intermittent seasons of backsliding, and the vicissitudes of life are concerned, they neither all attain the same measure of strength nor grow until their death. It can happen that a godly person who has become a man in Christ becomes weak spiritually in his old age when everything physical begins to weaken—yes, that prior to his death he falls into a particular sin, as is to be observed in David, Asa, Solomon, and Hezekiah. Therefore, one needs to pray most earnestly, “Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not” Ps 71:9,18. Someone has expressed this in this sweet verse:

Qui me servasti puerum, juvenemque virumque:  
Nunc fer opem misero, Christe benigne! seni.

That is,

Thou hast fed and preserved me;  
First as a child, then as a young man, and now in old age;  
However, help me now, oh Lord,  
In my gray old age.  
Oh, cause me to proceed prudently,  
And to stand firm for the truth as a rock.  
Let my last time be my best time;  
Let my life be one of peace and my end a joyous one.

Datheen adds the following poem:

Lord, when I shall be old and cold,  
 And weak and full of sorrow,  
 Then do not cast me away!  
 Exalted Lord, also when I am wretched above measure,  
 Then do not forsake me!<sup>9</sup>

However, *some proceed steadfastly* until their death. “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Ps 92:14). Thus, the Lord grants to each of His children their own measure of growth, the one more and the other less. The smallest one is as much His child as the greatest among them, and He loves the little ones as much as the mature ones. He will bring the one as well as the other into heaven.

### *The Growth of a Gracious Disposition*

Spiritual growth occurs in reference to habitual grace as well as actual grace. We shall first consider spiritual growth in reference to *habitual grace*.

(1) The increase in gifts to edify others (even if the use of these gifts is of increased benefit to others) is not evidence of growth if such activity does not proceed from *habitual grace* being in the soul. As such, an unconverted person can then excel a gracious person.

(2) It is also no indication of growth if someone increasingly refrains from sin, and becomes more eminent in the exercise of all manner of virtues, while in the meantime there is no improvement in the virtuous disposition of the heart. In external things the natural man can excel the truly godly person. Thus, one who has but a small measure of *habitual grace* can in this respect far excel him who has a greater measure of *habitual grace*. This is simply due to much activity proceeding from his nature and but little from continual union with Christ and making use of Him daily unto justification. One who does not continually strive to live in a reconciled relationship with God, and thus makes no daily use of Christ as His Surety, has but a small measure of purity in his sanctification.

(3) Spiritual growth also does not consist in receiving many comforts from the Lord, there being a greater measure of holiness at the time when this comfort is experienced. At such a time one is being carried and drawn forward. This is similar to a man carrying a child, and like a man taking a child by the hand who is willing to walk, thus causing the child to walk more rapidly than he would be

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<sup>9</sup> Metrical version of Psalm 71.

able to do in his own strength. The Lord refreshes His children at times in this manner, but when He puts them back on their own feet, they have but little more strength than was previously the case.

However, spiritual growth first of all consists *in the increase of spiritual light*. This is not an external knowledge of the literal sense of the Word of God, for the converted and unconverted have this in common—yes, the latter can even excel the former in this. Rather, there is an increase in spiritual light. Such a person understands the spirituality of the truths, that is, in their essential and spiritual nature. This light has an inherent warmth and ignites the soul in love, renders one fruitful, and brings spiritual truths into the soul, so that whatever is true in the Word also becomes true within. This light enables them to see God more clearly in His attributes and works—not only external to themselves but also within themselves. When there is less light in a room, only large objects and any obvious filth can be discerned. When the sun shines its rays brightly into a room, however, we shall see in those rays a multitude of dust particles which previously were not visible. Such is also true here. The more we see of God, the more we shall perceive the pollution of our heart. Spiritual growth consists in the increase of such light. “But grow ... in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18); “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning” (1 John 2:13); “Now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself” (Job 42:5-6).

Secondly, spiritual growth consists *in more persistent and steadfast fellowship with God*. Union with God constitutes the life, joy, and salvation of the soul. The unconverted are entirely without this, a regenerate person has but a small beginning of this, and he who may be a father in Christ has a larger measure. This is the essential issue, and everything is contingent upon it. One who receives a larger measure of grace receives this, both in larger measure and in greater steadfastness. The disposition of the heart is Godward, and the thoughts will be focused upon God. He will pray, yearn for, desire after, and speak with the Lord. His heart will be fixed upon the Lord, and he will rest, rejoice in, and glorify Him. In such a frame he lies down, sleeps, and awakes, while still being with Him. His thoughts will then not gravitate toward earthly and vain things, but to his God. He will immediately be aware of any estrangement or darkness setting in. It will without delay cause grief, and he will not be able to rest until intimate and humble communion with the Lord has been restored. This is the epitome of his felicity. “Nevertheless I am continually with thee” (Ps 73:23);

“But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps 73:28). The more the latter is true for a person, the more he grows.

Thirdly, spiritual growth consists in *making use of Christ with more understanding and a greater measure of faith*. Growth which does not center in Christ is no spiritual growth. He who is of the opinion that he only needed Christ at the outset of his spiritual life and that he is now beyond that and thus leaves Christ alone, only focusing upon holiness—or if he solely makes use of Christ as an example for holiness—has gone astray and regresses more than he progresses. He who lives, lives in Christ “who is our life” Col 3:4, and he who grows, grows in Christ. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith” (Col 2:6-7); “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:15-16). Christ is the vine, believers have been grafted into this vine, and continually draw sap from this vine. They live and grow by means of the sap from this vine, and they never progress so far that they have no need of the vine, Christ (Rom 6:5). “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (John 15:5). We grow in Christ when we continually unite ourselves with Christ by faith as our Surety unto justification; that is, if we continually make use of Him as the way and as the High Priest to go unto God by Him. This means that we shall neither dare nor are able to approach unto God except through Him, being acquainted with God’s majesty, holiness, and our own sinfulness. We shall furthermore understand that it is unbecoming Godward and us-ward to have fellowship with God apart from Him. Furthermore, we grow when we do not consider God’s attributes in and of themselves, but rather as they manifest themselves in Christ, and as such reflect upon us. This is the work of angels, and the more a person increases in grace, the more he will exercise himself in this. All this constitutes growth, and he who does not grow in this respect is not growing—however much this may appear to be so and he may imagine himself to be increasing in other things. Such growth is worth little.

Fourthly, spiritual growth consists in *a purer sort of engagement*. The more we increase, the more we shall take note of the manner in which we engage ourselves. We shall then find no delight in our conduct if it is not governed by a holy objective; that is, not having

ourselves in view, but doing all to the honor of God 1 Cor 10:31, in the presence of God Gen 17:1, in obedient submission to God and His will Eph 6:6, in love 1 Cor 13:1, in the fear of God Job 31:23, and in believing union with Christ and through Christ with God (Heb 1:6). We shall thus do everything out of God, for God, and unto God. This is what is meant by our deeds being “wrought in God” (John 3:21). Thus, spiritual growth does not only consist in doing much, but in doing it well.

Fifthly, spiritual growth also consists in *an increased manifestation of grace*. Habitual graces cannot be restrained from manifesting themselves, but will break forth as actions. When a believer is actively engaged in mortifying sin and intent upon the practice of a virtue, this will beget a frame of heart which opposes all sin and is inclined toward all virtues. The heart will become increasingly virtuous, and thus a good heart will bring forth good deeds, and the exercise of good deeds will improve the frame of the heart. When a godly person grows, he not only grows in one virtue, but in all. He does not first totally mortify the one sin before proceeding with the next. He also does not first learn one virtue, and having learned that, move on to another; rather, it transpires simultaneously. He does indeed focus more on the one sin and on the one virtue more than the other. He is also frequently more victorious with the one sin and virtue than with the other. At the same time he gains in spiritual-mindedness and thus prevails over all sins and unto all virtues. Nevertheless, the one sin will retain more vigor than the other, and the one virtue will be exercised less than the other.

#### *Growth in the Actual Manifestation of Grace*

First, *there is growth when one becomes concerned about more sins and desires more virtues*. At the very outset of spiritual life we generally are mostly aware of sin—and particularly of a given sin or sins—which are our most besetting sins into which we fall most frequently. We shall then consider it to be a great accomplishment if we have not committed this sin or these sins on a specific day. When we grow spiritually, however, we become aware of more sins and will strive more against them—not only against external but also against internal sins. This will also pertain to both our neglect and deficiency in the performance of virtues. In the evening one will ask, “Have I abstained from my besetting sins?” One will ask, “Have I also committed other sins? What good have I performed in this day and in what manner have I performed it?” When we grow we shall also exercise more virtues than was previously the case—both in regard to the first and the second table of the law.

Then we shall bear *much fruit* (John 15:5). “At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits” (Song 7:13); “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Pet 1:5-7).

Secondly, *there is growth when we persevere upon encountering powerful opposition*. Such is true when we are able to let the fiery darts of the wicked be deflected by the shield of faith, and when we do not permit inward strife to hinder and detract us from the performance of our duties toward God and our neighbor, thus conquering the wicked one (1 John 2:13). We grow when we are able to avoid those situations which generally cause us to fall, or, if we must be in them, we conduct ourselves better than was previously the case. We grow when worldly charm no longer entices us, but when it has lost its charm so that it is no longer esteemed, no more advantage is seen in it, and it has lost its appeal. This means that neither by flattery, nor by threats, nor by actual or verbal persecution shall we allow ourselves to be detracted from our godliness. We grow when, by reason of the fear of and love for God, we can more easily resist sinful lusts which stir within, and upon falling arise all the more readily—yes, as a result of falling become stronger and more careful. We grow, when in spite of all opposition, we persevere, rather than that we be drawn away.

Thirdly, *there is spiritual growth when we proceed with the practice of virtue with more wisdom, determination, faith, and zeal*. The initial zeal of the believer is mixed with many natural passions. At that time we shall act ill-advisedly, and, in one way or the other go beyond our boundaries. We then know neither when nor how to act. We shall be either in good or low spirits and be either active or passive. A minor event will readily cast us down, and faith, hope, and love will easily succumb. However, after frequent stumblings, falling and rising again, we then begin to walk more steadfastly, rely more upon the Lord Jesus by faith—even when the Lord hides Himself, and the feelings, which the Christian is so intent upon having, depart. We then, nevertheless, persevere in the way which we have chosen and in our seeking. Falling into sin is much more grievous than before, but we nevertheless do not disown our state so readily. We rely more upon the Word and shall unreservedly put our trust in it. We know in whom we have believed and become better acquainted with how God deals with His children, knowing that the Lord will again cause the darkness to disappear. We become more steadfast in our conduct, more careful with our words, and more thoughtful in our conduct. A wisdom which is

both humble and meek will increasingly shine forth. We shall not be disturbed when we neither receive love nor esteem from others, being well satisfied to live with God alone. We shall then have a love which goes out to the godly and to all men—in a manner appropriate to each individual—and it shall be manifested. With composed zeal we do what we know to be our duty. We speak when we must speak and are silent when we must be silent, and in the performance of our duty we shall neither allow ourselves to be hindered by our own inability, nor by the pride, wisdom, goodness, or wickedness of men. We become more and more weaned from the creature. The love of Christ constrains, and the hope of glory motivates to be active. If we fall, we rise again, and if we have not conducted ourselves well in other respects, we then strive for improvement. We take hold of the strength of the Lord and charge through all opposition, and shall thus proceed from strength to strength.

### *The Need for Self-Examination*

You who either read or hear this read, examine yourself in light of this. What do you now say of yourself? Are you growing or are you not growing? Bring yourself into the presence of God who knows your heart and who will judge you. Do not flatter yourself with vain imaginations, and do not bypass your heart. On the other side, do not deny your growth if there has been some, for it is not your work, but the result of the grace of God. If you may perceive some growth, it will greatly comfort and strengthen you; if not, it ought to motivate you to seek true conversion or zeal to make progress in this matter. To that end, do not hesitate to read that which has been said once more and to examine yourself in that mirror. Has your spiritual light increased? Do you have a more continual and steadfast fellowship with God? Do you make use of the Lord Jesus with more understanding and a greater measure of faith? Are you more upright in your dealings? Has the scope of your engagement increased regarding sins and virtues? Do you persevere more upon encountering strong opposition? Do you proceed with more wisdom, determination, faith, and zeal? What do you say for yourself? Do not focus upon a brief time span, but compare yourself as to who you were prior to your conversion and the present, and since your conversion and the present. Do not deny grace because you are ambitious to achieve a certain level of grace, nor in the way of *ingratitude*, by not considering what you have received—as if it were your own work and you should already have made more progress. You will thus grieve and chide yourself more, rather than being joyful. Therefore, judge yourself in a realistic manner.

(1) Some may perhaps have become convinced of not only having failed to make any progress, but rather that they never even have had any grace, and that until now they have only been a run-along. All their activity has only been a product of their mind and natural zeal.

(2) Some will perceive that they are progressing in sin, and are adding the one sin to the other; that they are progressing from one evil to the other; that their sinning has reached a higher level; and that with highly elevated shields they battle against the Lord and say, so to speak: "We do not desire to hear Thee." Contrary to all light and conviction, they break through, and, in an ungodly manner, engage in wickedness and render sin exceedingly sinful. They become more and more insensitive in their commission of sin, having seared their conscience with a hot iron, so that they commit all manner of sin all the more intently.

(3) Some will remember their first spiritual emotion, the first time they became aware of their duty, their first conviction and prayer, and their desisting from sin for a season. In spite of all that, however, they willingly departed from that way again, and as a dog they have turned to their own vomit; and as a washed sow to their wallowing in the mire (2 Pet 2:22). It may be that they have been hardened, or that they think, "Woe unto me! What have I done! What have I departed from! If only I had those first motions again!"

(4) Some may possibly have good thoughts about themselves, be of the opinion that they wish to continue in this way, that they will thus be saved, and that nothing more is necessary. They do not wish to be that particular in their walk; they leave that to the hair-splitters. Oh, who will deliver such?

Oh, that someone would be sensibly convinced and receive a deep impression of his wretched condition, for all your righteousnesses will be deemed to have no value, as they did not proceed from your inner inclination. Indeed, all the illumination and conviction from which you have departed and which you have resisted will aggravate your judgment and condemnation if you do not repent, and in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the heathen than for you. They will stand up against you and justify your condemnation. Oh, consider all this, become sensible, and repent; for to be under conviction is the primary means unto conversion. Then there is still hope, for Christ still calls you. Why then would you die?

#### *Concerned Souls Addressed*

From the foregoing many of those who are truly gracious will

perceive that they have indeed backslidden, and that they are as the congregation of Ephesus, to whom the Lord Jesus says, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:5). I wish that the following words would be applied to their heart: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Rev 2:5). We shall speak of this in the following chapter. There are, however, gracious souls who in truth have not backslidden, and who, nevertheless, are of the opinion that they are backsliding, thus doubting their entire spiritual state. For they think: “Growth is peculiar to God’s children, but I am a backslider, and thus I am not a child of God.” However, it ought to be known:

(1) That many are not capable of perceiving their own growth. They do not remember their previous condition, and thus are not able to judge about their present condition. At that time they were as yet without understanding about the spiritual nature of their propensities and actions, and therefore they only focused on their preceding vehement emotions, with which, if they had them under the current circumstances, they would presently not be pleased.

(2) That growth cannot be measured by what we were yesterday, the day before yesterday, or a month ago. Rather, we are to compare ourselves with what we were at the outset of our spiritual life and what we are now; we would then be able to discern our growth.

(3) That a godly person has his spiritual winters. Just as a tree appears to be barren and dead in the winter, one will nevertheless be able to perceive that it has grown when comparing it to the time that it was first planted. A child of God grows in the same fashion—even though he has his winters.

(4) That a tree occasionally grows more in one branch and then again in another branch. A child of God grows likewise—sometimes more in the one area and then again in the other. Even if he does not grow as much in that wherein he previously flourished, he therefore cannot say: “I am not growing.” He now grows either more in the root, in breadth, or in another branch.

(5) That when we say that growth is peculiar to God’s children, it is to be understood as a normal habitual tendency. Such is true for men or for trees when planted in suitable soil, from which they can extract suitable nourishment, and when receiving an adequate amount of rain and sunshine. A believer can at times be deprived of suitable nourishment, or of rain and sunshine. He can even become ill or meet with an accident. Would an ill child, or he who has met with an accident, say, “I am not human, for I do not grow?”

(6) That we sometimes have fellowship with other Christians

who grow much more than we do. They have had a later start, and now they have already passed us by. From this one could draw the erroneous conclusion: Since others grow more and more quickly than I do, I am consequently not growing.

(7) That we now have eyes which are more spiritual and have a stronger desire for greater things. Since these stronger and more elevated desires are not fulfilled, we can therefore not conclude that we are not growing. On the contrary, we are to conclude from this that we are indeed growing as our light and desires are increasing.

(8) That the godly generally believe that they are regressing. Well, let that be as it may, for that is nevertheless a sign that they have grown. For if one had neither life nor growth, one would also not be able to regress. Let us then assume that you are not as serious-minded as at the beginning, that you cannot pray as fervently and with as many tears, and that you now occasionally fall into sin from which you could desist at that time. However, at that time you were more motivated by a fear for perishing and all this was accompanied by natural emotions. The opportunity for given sins was then not there, and you were not tried and tempted by the enemies as you are now. I therefore conclude that you have not regressed; or if you have truly backslidden, there has nevertheless been life and growth. And if these have been there, they are still there, for He who has begun that good work in you will also finish it. If, however, you compare yourself with composure to what we have said, you will not dare to say that you have backslidden, but you will be convinced that you have grown; that you have more light, faith, intimate and familiar communion with God; and that there is more love, steadfastness, more comprehensiveness, and more fervor in all your conduct than was previously the case. Therefore, acknowledge the grace which you have and rejoice over it; and may this in turn stir you up.

#### *Reasons Why Believers Do Not Grow as Much as They Ought*

Even though many among the converted come to the conclusion that they do not grow, it is nevertheless true that they do not grow as much as they ought to. How many blessed means they have! There is the precious Word of God, the sincere milk; there are spiritual and faithful ministers who have excellent gifts and are inclined to lead everyone by the hand; and there are eminent examples which ought to stimulate all to emulation. How little they benefit from this, however, and how little growth there is by many! One must frequently be amazed—and many are amazed about themselves—that they do not grow more. Thus they rightfully

rebuke themselves, for it is indeed their own fault. They think: “What is the cause of all this?” My answer is: “You are the cause.”

First, there is at times the secret and carnal thought that one shall nevertheless be saved, for if one has grace—whether to a smaller or greater degree—salvation will ensue upon this. This is God’s promise to the regenerate, and thus growth is not that essential. My response is that this proceeds from the flesh, for the principle of grace is of a different nature. Yes, even if growth were not essential, the spiritual nature is nevertheless inclined toward growth. It is the life and delight of this nature, and it knows that this is pleasing to God. Therefore, away with this sinning at the expense of grace.

Secondly, many are hindered by their unbelief and think, “I am not a child of God anyhow; I have no grace. Why should I strive for growth?” Such are always occupied with finding evidences of their regeneration. At times their conclusion is this: “I am not converted; believers are entirely different from what I am.” And thus they go on despondently and desist from spiritual activity. Occasionally they do come to the conclusion, “Indeed, I have grace,” and thus are invigorated in their walk. It does not last long, however, and they again begin to doubt, and by renewal begin to examine themselves. Such are like a mason who, having laid the foundation, proceeds to build, but then begins to doubt whether he has indeed laid the foundation and consequently turns everything upside down and begins anew—a little while later repeating the same procedure.

Thirdly, many are too despondent to make progress, for they perceive so many vices in themselves. They are conscious of the many virtues they ought to have and this causes them to be at their wit’s end. Furthermore, they deem all their efforts to have been fruitless until now and believe that all will be in vain in the future. Sin is too prevalent and the manifestations of virtues are too weak. They know not what to do and thus their hands become feeble. Instead, they ought to consider that he who overcomes one sin and perseveres in one virtue accomplishes this by reason of a virtuous disposition, and that this is at the same time applicable to all sins and all virtues.

Fourthly, world conformity enters the picture here. Believers still have a desire for the things of the world under the cover and pretense that they are lawful, necessary, and fitting—even though the real motive is love for the world. The world and the Spirit are enemies, and the one is always intent on expelling the other; they are a mutual impediment to each other, and therefore we must

either fully yield to the world, or must yield fully and entirely to grace. As long as we halt between two opinions, and as long as we attempt to join together Christ and Belial, so long shall we make no progress. A bird which has been fastened to the earth will fall back to the earth when it wants to fly upward. Thus, he who wishes to fly heavenward must divorce himself from the world.

Fifthly, many are hindered in their walk solely by laziness. Just as it is true in the natural realm that the soul of the sluggard is desirous, but has nothing, since his hands refuse to labor, so it is in the spiritual realm. We indeed desire to be in an elevated spiritual frame and to grow as a palm tree, but we are not willing to exert any effort—and thus we also do not receive it. Effort is required here—consisting in prayer, fasting, watchfulness, meditation, and the engagement in spiritual warfare. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. Therefore, you who are desirous of attaining the end must also be desirous to use the means. When the bride remained upon her comfortable bed and made many excuses for not arising and giving entrance to the bridegroom, he departed and left her empty. Therefore, leave your bed while others are sleeping. Seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, pray and you shall receive; and thus you will experience that this work is not as difficult as you are currently considering it to be. In the beginning it may be somewhat unpleasant, but it will soon become sweet when you will perceive how sweet the rewards are upon but a little effort.

#### *Christians Exhorted to Strive for Spiritual Growth*

Therefore, Christians, to the task! Strive to grow in both habitual and actual grace, for:

First, your spiritual state is as yet imperfect and you have but a small beginning of life. If in all that we begin to undertake we strive for completion, should you then remain stationary at the starting point? The greater and more glorious perfection is, the more desirous we should be to attain it, the more earnest our endeavors should be, and no trouble should be spared to achieve this.

Secondly, not to grow is to remain in your sin and pollution. Would you who have been washed in the blood of Christ, have become partakers of the Spirit of sanctification, are the children of God, have become the bride of the holy Jesus—will you continue in your sorrow and remain in your pollution? Oh, let it not be thus! Be no longer disobedient to God your Father. Disentangle yourself from the bondage of pollution, expel sin, and flee from it. The

more you grow, the more you will distance yourself from sin; and the more you distance yourself from sin, the more you will grow.

Thirdly, the more one grows, the more the image of God will become manifest, and the more likeness to God there will be—for that is the perfection held before us. You already do grieve, however, that you are so far from God, and with all your desire you long to be near to God. It is your only and all-satisfying comfort to live in blessed communion with God. Of all this there is a small beginning in you and there is the certainty that this suggested perfection is to be attained. Would you not then pursue that which you love so much; would you not then make this your objective and endeavor to come closer to achieving this? Yes, it has already been prepared for you and God stands ready to give it to you. He holds it, so to speak, in His hand and calls you but to come in order that He may place the crown of perfection upon you. Therefore, forget what is behind you and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).

Fourthly, the more one grows, the more pleasing he will be to God. A father is delighted when his children grow, and one rejoices when he observes the growth of trees he has planted. Since, however, God takes pleasure in the growth of His children, having regenerated them by His will and according to the Word of His truth, and since He delights Himself in the garden and the trees which He Himself has planted there, should we then not endeavor to be pleasing unto the Lord and to become “His pleasant plant” Isa 5:7?

Fifthly, God is glorified by our growth, for therein it becomes apparent that He is neither a barren nor a howling wilderness to His children, but that He is good, benevolent, faithful, holy, and omnipotent. This is evident from the fact that He fulfills His promises to them, preserves them in the midst of all enemies, causes them even to grow in the midst of all manner of storms, pours out His Spirit upon them, and reveals the invisible things to them. And those who grow are rendered fit to honor and glorify Him. Therefore, you who desire to live to the honor and glory of your God, to be trees of righteousness that He might be glorified Isa 61:3, and are desirous to declare the Lord’s glory—having been formed by Him for that purpose—strive for growth, for herein is God “glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

Sixthly, the Lord will grant many comforts to those who grow, so that they will find much delight and joy in their growth. The Lord promises that He will manifest Himself to them and make His abode with them. He will grant them an increasing measure of grace,

fill them with His Spirit, and cause them to increase even more. “Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2); “They ... shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:31). Therefore, you who find delight in these promises—which is your desire, children of God—do not remain stationary, do not be satisfied with the condition in which you are, do not teeter on the brink of spiritual failure, but be resolved to charge ahead and to make progress. I repeat: *The reward is commensurate with the labor performed.*

#### *Additional Means*

He who is therefore desirous to make progress:

(1) Let him be intent to do so with *valiant courage*. Let him take hold of the strength of Christ as his own and thus proceed in the strength of the Lord. Let him be fully resolved wholly to exert himself, to yield to nothing, and to spare no labor or effort to be assured of the perfection to be attained hereafter, and to grow in this present state. “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart” (Ps 31:24).

(2) Proceed with a *joyful willingness*, rejoicing in the resolution itself, the end to be attained, and that you will charge through your enemies. Willingly engage yourself in this work and in the fact that you will proceed that much more prosperously. “Serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind” (1 Chron 28:9).

(3) Should *not be too distraught about sustained wounds*, nor be despondent about his falls, for these will occur frequently. If these render you inactive, causing you to give up in discouragement, you will not make much progress. Rather, you are to arise time and again. Make a new beginning every morning and do so especially every sabbath. Persevere in your resolve and focus on the reward. If much opposition comes, stand firm as a rock, resist it with force, and charge through it. They who are for you are more than they who are against you, and you have the promise that the Lord will raise up those who are bowed down and will grant them new strength.

(4) *Continually feed upon the Word of God* for by this one grows. Be continually in prayer in order that you might continually be strengthened and supported by the Spirit of the Lord—for you are weak and will not prevail in your own strength. Continually exercise faith so that you may continually be united with Christ and apply the promises to yourself. You will thus purify the heart by faith, overcome the world, and resist the devil. While thus

engaged, you will soon experience that you are progressing and increasing in strength.

(5) Should *continually be engaged in battle against all sins* and be in the practice of all virtues. However, be especially vigilant against your besetting sin—that chief sin—by which you are most frequently tempted and into which you most frequently fall, which will trigger all other sins and turn everything upside down within. Make a covenant to oppose those sins, conduct days of fasting to that end, flee all opportunities for sin and when they present themselves, cast them away from you as rapidly as you remove fire from your clothing. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).



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## CHAPTER NINETY

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### Backsliding in the Spiritual Life of the Godly

Even though the nature of the regenerate is such that it is always disposed toward growth, and though some of the regenerate grow more than others, they nevertheless do not proceed in the might of the Lord from strength to strength without resistance. They do not always have the valor of a majestic horse in battle, nor are they always “as mighty men, who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle” (Zech 10:5). They do not always grow as a palm tree and as a cedar upon Lebanon. They cannot always boast with Hannah: “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord” (1 Sam 2:1). Their latter works are not always more than their first works—such as was true for the congregation of Thyatira. However, as trees experience their winters in which they are void of foliage and fruits, appearing to be barren and dead, the godly likewise have their spiritual winters. The Lord Jesus said to the church, “The winter is past,” which implies that it had experienced a winter. As people are subject to numerous illnesses, the godly likewise are subject to numerous spiritual illnesses. What a most blessed time it would be if there would not be one inhabitant of spiritual Jerusalem who would say, “I am sick!” Such is, however, not always the case.

These illnesses we now wish to discuss. We shall first consider backsliding in general and then focus on some specific spiritual illnesses to which believers become subject.

When speaking of backsliding we are thereby not to understand the daily stumblings, spiritual strife, and a lack of spirituality, which pass after a short period of time. He who is able to pray and engage

in spiritual warfare will not have to complain much about backsliding. The complaints of such a believer are generally due to an increase in light and life, as a result of which he perceives more sin than he did previously; and becomes better acquainted with the nature of spirituality, which ought to be present in all his activity. Furthermore, he has an increased desire for a more elevated and spiritual frame. Since he perceives himself yet to be so far removed from all this, he is of the opinion that he is backsliding, whereas in reality he is gaining ground.

Instead, we understand backsliding to be the very opposite of growth: the decrease of both habitual and actual graces. It is possible that the life in the soul becomes less viable and loses its vigor and this must necessarily result in a decline in the quality of the actions—be it regarding the spirituality or regarding the manifestation of these actions. In some, the habitual manifestation of grace will continue as before. Since, however, intimate fellowship with God—the strength of their light and life—becomes less, the spirituality of its manifestation is also reduced. Sometimes this can occur suddenly—when one suddenly, from being in a good frame, reverts into darkness, a sinful condition, and a state of spiritual desertion. Sometimes believers backslide gradually and imperceptibly, similar to Samson’s case who, without his knowledge, was deprived of his strength. When he intended to use it, he perceived that the Lord had departed from him. Such is also the experience of some of the godly. They proceed as they normally do in maintaining their relationship with God, and in offering ejaculatory prayers, not perceiving that they are losing ground. They neglect their devotional exercises or they perform them quickly. There are no express transactions with God through Christ, and if they then earnestly seek to begin as of old, only then will they experience what they have lost. They are then astonished that they are not able to draw near. Some do recover from this and renew their youth as the eagle’s, but others fall victim to a spiritual consumption and languish until their death.

*Seasons of Backsliding: Common to Most Believers*

When believers perceive that they are backslidden, they are at once ready to disown their spiritual state and to think that it has never been right with them. They cannot believe that others encounter this, believing that it is always given to others to grow. It is therefore necessary to show to them that the godly indeed have their seasons of backsliding.

This is, first of all, to be observed in declarations that they are

backslidden. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4); “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord” (Lam 3:18); “For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity” (Ps 31:10); “My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me” (Ps 38:10). The wise virgins also fell asleep Matt 25:5, and also the bride, even though her heart was yet wakeful (Song 5:2).

Secondly, this is to be observed in the warnings relative to this. “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15); “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (Heb 12:12-13).

Thirdly, this is to be observed from the complaints of the saints about their lack of what they previously possessed. “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me” (Job 29:2-5); “Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses?” (Ps 89:49).

From all this it is evident that saints indeed do backslide, and it thus ought not to be a strange thing to you—as if you were encountering something which other children of God do not experience. You are therefore not to disown your state, for this would cause you to backslide even further. At the appropriate occasion we have shown that true believers cannot apostatize.

### *The Causes of Backsliding*

It will be subservient to one’s restoration and to his proper conduct while in a backslidden state, to be acquainted with the causes which engender backsliding. We shall therefore present the most significant of them.

First, the Lord at times withdraws Himself in order to try believers and to teach them to understand things which they previously were neither acquainted with nor had committed; that is, not in that manner, nor to that extent. He wants them to be humbled about their sinfulness, being desirous that they would make more use of Christ and value Him more. He wishes to acquaint them, in a vivid and experiential manner, with His longsuffering, the freeness of His grace, His care for them, and His faithfulness. To that end He occasionally withdraws Himself, even

though there are no specific reasons given from their side. At least this is not the reason for His withdrawal. Observe this, for example, in 2 Chron 32:31: “God left him (Hezekiah), to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” When God withdraws Himself, backsliding follows.

Secondly, backsliding sometimes results from the commission of a particularly heinous sin—a sin committed intentionally and against the conscience. This is particularly the case when this sin gives great offense. This is to be observed in David’s life after he committed sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. The magnitude of his backsliding to which he became subject is evident from his confession, complaints, and supplication for restoration in Ps 51. Upon the commission of such sin, God withdraws Himself and the soul loses its vigor due to this wound.

Thirdly, it is sometimes caused by a cleaving to sins which are of a lesser degree. This happens when in the course of everyday life we do not live as tenderly according to our conscience as usual, but rather give in to lesser sins. It can be that we yield to sinful phantasies, or think about other worldly or vain matters. This saps the vitality of spiritual life, causes the heart to be estranged from God, and results in a reduction of vigor.

Fourthly, it is sometimes caused by failure to make use of Christ continually unto justification and sanctification. At the outset of spiritual life Jesus was precious, we sought Him continually for forgiveness, continually came to God through Him, were stirred up to pursue justification and sanctification, and thus were growing for a season. Some depart from this way, however, doing so either out of ignorance or due to vain wisdom, whereby they are of the opinion that Christ is only to be made use of for entering into a gracious state. Having presently attained to this, they know not how to make further use of Him, for they believe that since they already possess grace, they cannot remove themselves from the state of grace and, so to speak, start afresh. They are not acquainted with the manner in which a soul ought to be occupied in meditating—while making personal application to themselves—upon the way in which God leads a man unto salvation through Christ. They do not know what wondrous discoveries they may make while doing so and how the perfections of God may be beheld in the face of Christ. They neither know what it means to delight themselves in the love of Christ; nor how they, upon having sinned, must repeatedly receive Him unto justification, applying His blood to their heart for the purging of the conscience in order to serve the living God, nor do they know how they are to make

use of Him continually unto sanctification. Acting as if all this were but the work of a beginning Christian, they entrust their soul to Christ with a greater or lesser measure of assurance, and subsequently proceed with sanctification, prayer for strength against sin, and the practice of virtue. If in doing so they may gain something, make progress in sanctification, and have immediate fellowship with God—worshiping, loving, and fearing Him—they are of the opinion that they are growing. In reality, however, they remain immature and even regress from the measure of spirituality they previously had. Their sanctification lacks both purity and much of the true essence of sanctification. It becomes more a natural work and approximates the virtuousness of unconverted people. This becomes evident when either death or some other great danger approaches; at which time sanctification can be of no comfort and one needs Christ alone for support. Then one will perceive that they who appeared to be men are but weak children and inexperienced in the unadulterated way of salvation. They who grow spiritually grow in Christ. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith” (Col 2:6-7); “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15).

Fifthly, backsliding is sometimes caused by despondency and a disowning of our faith. Such believers do indeed have a great desire for progress and they also strive for it. Rather than progressing, however, they believe themselves to be rapidly regressing. This nearly causes them to give up, since they do not know how to overcome this. Yes, they even begin to question their faith, and if they succeed in casting their faith aside, it is as if they have accomplished something. Such will truly regress due to their foolish and wrong actions, and due to the stopping of the fountain from which their growth must proceed. They ought to know that growth cannot be detected every day; that as long as they are here below everything will only be in part; that to struggle and to strive is growth; that salvation is received out of free grace, by the merits of Christ, and in the way of sanctification; and that one must always continue to exercise faith in order to be saved.

Sixthly, sometimes backsliding is caused by laziness, manifesting itself either in the neglect or hasty performance of one’s morning, noon, and evening devotions; that is, if one has time for this. When the bride remained on her bed, the bridegroom departed; if we do not pray, we shall not receive. Imperceptibly the soul becomes less familiar with God and loses her vigor, even though this will not be

noticed at first. Furthermore, the Lord, perceiving that there is so little desire to seek Him, withdraws Himself, and this cannot but result in backsliding.

*Believers Exhorted to Seek Restoration*

He who finds himself guilty of one of these acts of backsliding ought to acknowledge that he himself is the cause of his backsliding. Let him justify God, and if he desires to grow, let him improve this situation. Even though we would have just cause to rebuke him sharply and to threaten him, we prefer to have compassion with him in his sinful frame, and lament over him. Such persons are generally mortally wounded, and therefore we wish to take them by the hand and lift them up. And you (to whom this applies), do not resist, but allow yourself to be persuaded and exert yourself to arise.

The Lord, who has called you and granted you life, not only requires from you that you strive for growth, but that you, having regressed, repent and do your first works. Is this divine injunction from your heavenly Father of none effect upon you? Does it neither affect nor impress your heart? It is one thing to know your duty and to say, "I know this to be my duty and I have known this for a long time," and it is another thing to hear the voice of the Lord attentively and to take His injunction to heart. Beloved, hear the calling voice of the Lord and do not harden yourself against it. Sometimes the Lord arouses you by way of a complaint: "Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" (Jer 8:4-5). Sometimes the Lord does so by way of a threat: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly" (Rev 2:5). Sometimes the Lord does this by way of friendly allurements with many sweet promises: "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth. ... O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" Song 2:10-12,14. Furthermore, it is the Lord who time and again knocks on your heart and addresses you inwardly: "Arise." Oh, that you would hear, and that the voice of the Lord would so resound within you, that you would arise at once and recover yourself unto the renewal of your conversion!

Secondly, this state of backsliding, since it is both sinful and grievous, is indeed a burden to you. How grievous it is when God hides Himself; when light disappears and it becomes dark; when the

heart becomes faint and dull; when one is vulnerable to his enemies, barren, and fruitless; when a chill (due to the absence of zeal) closes up the heart; and when one languishes insensibly! How grievous it is when one falls from the one sin into the other, and the soul is filled with fear and terror upon considering the end of life! What a wretched condition indeed! Such is the nature of the regression, however, and you know and perceive it to be so. Why then would you yield to such a condition any longer? Therefore arise and return!

Thirdly, the longer you remain in this condition, the further you will stray. You are perhaps only beginning to backslide and think that it cannot get any worse. Beware of this condition, however, for the longer you wait with seeking recovery, the more you will deem the initial condition to have been a happy one. You will say, "Then I thought that it could not get any worse, but oh, if only I had now what I had then. If I were yet as I was then, I would still be hopeful for restoration!" And thus you will backslide more and more. Or are you brazen toward the Lord? Do you not wish to repent, but remain where you are, unless God Himself comes, picks you up, and carries you as you sometimes have to do with naughty children? Consider that God will not put up with your sulking. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" (Job 9:4). God may come and make life so bitter for you, that for the remainder of your life you will lament that you have been so rancorous toward the Lord. Therefore, take care that you regress no further.

Fourthly, consider the price the Lord Jesus had to pay in order to merit grace for you! He, the Lord of glory, became Surety for you and assumed your human nature in order that He could perform that great work. Out of pure and incomprehensible love He took your sins upon His account, endured all that bitter suffering in body and soul, rendered payment for you, satisfied God's justice, and merited peace and salvation for you. Consider what labor He has bestowed upon you to make all this known to you and to make you a partaker of conversion, spiritual life, faith, and the hope of glory!

Thus, even if you doubt whether you are a partaker of Him, you nevertheless know of your change, prior seeking, praying, and cleaving to Him; you perceive your present grief and sorrow over your lack of light, life, love, over your estrangement from God, and your inner desire to be nearer unto God; for your previous earnestness, and for a purity of holiness to the end that you might be pleasing to the Lord. If you had sufficient light and historical faith, you would acknowledge that these are evidences of true saving

faith. Furthermore, would you not give everything you had—and still have—in exchange for the entire world? You will thus perceive how appropriate it is to acknowledge what you have received. Therefore, should reflection upon all this not cause an inner melting of the heart about your backsliding? Will this not arouse the following resolve in you: “I shall return; I shall arise and return to my father; I was better off then than I am now; I wish to make a new beginning”? Oh, that the love of Jesus would conquer you, so that you would return to Him and seek Him in love! Therefore, arise and begin with new zeal.

Fifthly, your repentance will not only be advantageous to you, but heaven and earth will also rejoice over you. God will be pleased with it, the Lord Jesus will rejoice in it, and the angels will exult in it. “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:20). The angels accompany believers and take note of their conduct. Thus, when you arise from your regression—with which they are displeased—the angels who accompany you will rejoice and announce it to other angels, and together they will glorify God about your repentance. There is likewise joy about you upon earth. The ministers will see it, rejoice over it, and thank God for it. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). Believers who know you and observe your restoration will rejoice in this. After the lost penny and the lost sheep had been found, the neighbors were called together in order to rejoice together (Luke 15:4-9). Even if your own advantage could not motivate you to seek restoration, then you ought indeed to be moved to cause others to rejoice in God and to glorify Him. It will, however, also be to your personal advantage. It will be difficult for you to start afresh and to move beyond mourning and all opposition, and the difficulty of this work could keep you from pursuing it. Be it known, however, that the Lord will render this task much lighter than you can imagine. Frequently the Lord readily rewards sincere intentions and endeavors to repent. “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). The father of the prodigal son “saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Therefore, begin, and the Lord will help you and meet you in His eternal love.

Sixthly, let me address you once more in light of your own judgment about yourself, as you were not able to believe that you were in a state of grace. Let us assume this to be so. But what then? Are you to remain as you are? To do this would be tantamount to running willingly and knowingly to eternal perdition, for you know

that no one will get to heaven without regeneration, faith in Christ, and sanctification. You may say, “It is hopeless; it is done with me; I have neglected the time of grace; I have resisted the work of the Holy Spirit; I have become an apostate, and it is impossible that such will be brought to repentance again (Heb 6:4-6).” My response is that I have explained the meaning of this text above.

However, are you not contradicting your own judgment about yourself? Are you fully assured that there will be no grace for you and that you will never be converted? You do not truly dare to say this with composure, and you will perhaps be convinced that such thoughts are engendered more by despondency, fretfulness, and laziness, than from being assured that such is the case. You know that the gospel still offers Christ to you in all His fullness, promising salvation if you receive Him with a true faith. You are convinced that you are illuminated at least outwardly, are acquainted with grace, spiritual life, and the benefits thereof. Furthermore, you are desirous to be converted, to be set free from all your sins, and to serve the Lord in the way of genuine holiness—if only the Lord would grant you His Holy Spirit to that end. You are thus to observe that it is yet not too late. Even if presently you had not received anything, you do not know whether it will please the Lord to grant this to you in the future. Truly, if you would but set aside your fretfulness and crossness, and say with composure, “I am going to hell and eternal damnation,” you would seek to be delivered with all your heart and strive to attain salvation—even if you could not ascertain if you would receive this upon your seeking. You would then avail yourself of all means, saying, “Who can tell? There might yet be mercy” (Jon 3:9; Joel 2:14). Therefore, remaining inactive will not gain you anything, and a despondent and fretful casting away of all hope will not deliver you from hell. Instead, arise, engage yourself, and you will experience that those who seek the Lord will find Him.

#### *Means for Recovery from Backsliding*

If someone has been moved by that which has been said and is resolved to arise, he ought to know that active engagement must go hand in hand with this resolution. However, in order that such a person be not hindered in this endeavor, but be directed in the right way, he must be on guard against some things, and perform other things.

First, one is to be on guard against:

(1) That by which he became backslidden. Such a person ought to reflect upon his past for the purpose of discovering what it was. Having discovered this, he is to confess this before the Lord in the

way of self-condemnation, enter into a covenant against it, and always be on guard against coming into the power of this sin again—having felt the bitterness of this sin.

(2) Being despondent that things can never become right again, for despondency makes the hands feeble. It is true that if you were to undertake your restoration in your own strength, nothing would come of it. However, it proceeds from the Lord. “The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down” (Ps 145:14); “He giveth power to the faint” (Isa 40:29). He reaches out to you, thus enabling you by His grace to lift up your head out of your sorrow, and to be resolved to arise again. He who has thus reached out to you will subsequently also sustain you.

(3) Laxness and those motions that resist the Spirit. Beloved, do not give heed to your lazy flesh. Let the sweetness and purity of being in a restored state be worth something to you—it is indeed worth the price.

(4) Relationships with worldly people (that is, beyond that which is necessary), world conformity, and partial love. Instead, choose the Lord only as your portion, seek to have fellowship with the Lord in solitude, and thus demonstrate that nothing but the Lord is able to satisfy us.

Secondly, if you wish to recover from backsliding:

(1) Start from the beginning. This does not mean that you are to reject everything the Lord has previously wrought in you, and that you are to consider yourself as being without grace in an unconverted state. This a gracious person cannot do, for that would be a denial of something he has received. It would be an inordinate act of ingratitude. If, however, he cannot determine what his spiritual state is, he must quietly let this matter rest as something which he currently cannot discern. Instead, he must proceed as a small child. If he insists on proceeding with that measure of light and in the manner in which he had previously proceeded while being in a good frame, he would immediately succumb; it would be an impossible matter for him. If, however, he proceeds with that small measure of light and strength which as yet remains, and if he faithfully avails himself of these, he will gradually increase and not only return to the condition from which he has departed, but will become more steadfast and stronger than ever before.

(2) As he begins, he must be firmly resolved and willing to seek until the end of his life, and to arise as often as he falls down. He should be resolved to do so even if he were never to attain that comfort and that frame which he had prior to his departure.

Instead, he ought to rejoice that he may seek, pray, and strive, and that with his feeble strength he is able to do so, seldom being able to proceed without becoming faint by renewal. And if all this appears strange to him and he insists on becoming despondent over this, he will never make progress.

(3) He must wrestle to be restored in the way of faith. At times God will permit His children to see a glimpse of His countenance and to taste a little of the spiritual manna. The sweetness of this makes them so desirous that they would always wish to live in this enjoyment. Occasionally the Lord will do this at the outset of their restoration. The father of the prodigal son kissed his returning son immediately; however, the Lord does not always do so. He may let them taste the bitterness of their previous departures for some time and occasionally will enable them to find Him again after a long period of seeking. Thus, the returning sinner must not insist on the immediate enjoyment of sweetness, lest he be discouraged when it does not immediately transpire in this manner. If he receives this, it is to be deemed extraordinary. Instead, he must live by faith, and with uplifted heart hold before him the promises which God has promised to fulfill upon seeking. He must embrace and believe them as being certain and infallible truths which will also prove to be true in his case. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6).

Therefore, upon finding a promise in the Word of God, let him rely upon it without reservation. Let him deem these promises to be a certainty, even if a thousand spurious reasons could be produced to the contrary. Let him reason thus: “God is truthful and will confirm this to seekers—and thus also to me.” Let him therefore expectantly wrestle, pray, and hope upon the Lord until He is pleased to visit him. And even if it were so that he would not enjoy this in this life, he would most certainly receive it all in heaven upon his death. Would not this seeking then have been adequately rewarded? To believe this will be to his support, will lift him up time and again, and will cause the seeking itself to be sweet. In all humility he will plead with the Lord and remind Him of His nature, mercy, goodness, and grace, the satisfaction of the Surety Jesus Christ, and His promises. He will declare that he believes these promises, will rely upon and put his entire trust in them, trusting the Lord to vindicate His Word in the presence of angels and men. Let such a person therefore rely upon the Word, engage in his duty, and keep himself occupied in seeking.



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CHAPTER NINETY-ONE

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Spiritual Desertion

The thoughts and ways of the Lord are not the same as ours. Since many do not understand this, nor submit themselves well to the wise and sovereign dealings of God, they conduct themselves foolishly and manifest an increasingly negative disposition. Some who may have received a measure of light and life, would now wish to prescribe to the Lord the way in which He ought to lead His children. If, however, the Lord's dealings are not according to their conception, they either resist or are unable to justify the Lord in His way by subjecting themselves to them with quiet resignation. If they do so, it is only in view of their sinfulness, deeming themselves worthy of being dealt with in this manner—acting as if they were still in the covenant of works, subject to God's wrath, and as yet not having been translated into the state of grace. If we were wise, we would not disown our spiritual state when God deals with us in a distasteful manner. We would then submit ourselves to God—not only in view of having sinned, and thus having to endure all this, but also because all the Lord's dealings are only wise, good, faithful, and loving. We would then believe this and willingly submit ourselves to the Lord's government—however painful this would be, and however little we would be able to comprehend the Lord's reasons and purposes.

Among all the ways in which the Lord leads His people, *spiritual desertion* is among the most unique. Believers generally do not behave themselves well when thus led, and it will therefore be fruitful if we delineate the nature of this condition, comfort those who are deserted, and give them direction.

### *What Spiritual Desertion is Not*

First, in discussing *spiritual desertion* we do not understand this to refer to *the desertion of the unconverted*. God does grant much temporal prosperity, riches, honor, and prominence to the unconverted. He may grant them external illumination, historical faith, conviction, stirrings unto repentance, and a fleeing from the base pollutions of the world. When such persons abuse all these common blessings and do not repent in consequence of this, God deserts them altogether and gives them over to themselves. Then they become even more abominable than before, upon which even more dreadful judgments may follow. This may already occur in this world, so that divine justice is both observed and glorified in them. However, this will especially occur after they die—in hell. This is to be observed in 1 Sam 16:14: “But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him,” as well as in (Rom 1:21-26). However, we are here discussing the desertion of the regenerate.

Secondly, we do not understand this to be *an entire or a final desertion*. That is impossible, due to God’s immutable decree and election, Christ’s atonement, the sealing and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and all the sure promises of God. During a period of desertion, the Lord sustains the regenerate by secret and imperceptible influences. “The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down” (Ps 145:14).

Thirdly, we do not understand this to be a *lesser infusion of spiritual grace* in the one as compared to the other. In His church, God has children of various maturity. There are children, young men, and fathers. The children have a much smaller measure of grace than the fathers, but they are therefore not in a state of desertion. A father can be in a state of desertion while having and preserving more grace than the children.

Fourthly, we also do not understand it to refer to *the cessation of extraordinary illuminations and comforts*, after which those of an ordinary nature continue. When Paul returned again from the third heaven, it could not be said of him that he was deserted. God also grants certain of His children something extraordinary which is above and beyond the way in which they are commonly led. When this ceases, He causes them to return to their normal state. Such are not to think that they are deserted to a greater or lesser degree since they now have to miss the extraordinary.

Fifthly, we also do not understand this to refer to *daily offenses*, even though they occur due to the absence of the Spirit’s influence, who indeed would have been able to keep us from such

offenses. This is nevertheless not a withdrawal of His normal influences. Even if *the falling into special sins* (against which we would have been able to remain standing by way of the normal support of the Spirit) indeed occurs due to the withdrawal of His influence—“God left him” 2 Chron 32:31—this is nevertheless not the desertion which is under discussion here.

Sixthly, we also do not understand this to refer to *a reduction of habitual grace*. God does not only move His own by way of external influences, but rather, He brings spiritual life into the soul, and this life is more vigorous in the one than in the other. This life, by reason of its spiritual principle, not only has an inherent inclination to be active, but in reality also is active by virtue of the normal operation of the Spirit. Thus, this infused propensity is enhanced by way of exercise, but can also be diminished by a variety of causes. In spiritual desertion God neither removes these propensities entirely nor partially. Instead, He withholds the normal operation of the Spirit, and as a necessary consequence of this, habitual graces sometimes diminish. This is, however, not true for all desertion, for in some cases habitual graces will increase—such as is true for tree roots, both during storms as well as during winters.

#### *Spiritual Desertion Defined*

*Spiritual desertion is a lengthy withholding and withdrawal of those normal operations and influences of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate by which He illuminates them, assures them of His favor, comforts them, fortifies them against sin and temptation, and renders them help in and deliverance from temporal trials. This causes them to be in darkness, weak in faith, disconsolate, to fall into sin, succumb to temptations, and to remain grieved and fretful in the bearing of a temporal cross.*

Thus, desertion pertains to both justification (and all that relates to it) and sanctification. The desertion of one person may pertain more to justification, and to sanctification with another. For the one person it is of longer duration and for the other of shorter duration. Some experience this at the outset of their conversion. It can go so far that it seems as if all will come to nought, and it seems more unlikely than ever before that their conversion is true. However, the Lord will intermittently manifest Himself to them and cause them to be steadfast again. Some come into this grievous condition after they have made some progress, the Lord having manifested Himself intimately. This will occur either suddenly or gradually. Some have to taste this at the end of their life, and sometimes the Lord will grant them His comforts again prior to their death, causing them to depart triumphantly. Sometimes they

die in a condition of great desertion, darkness, and powerful temptations. In one moment they go from one extreme to the other, and that which they never thought they would attain to, they receive unexpectedly.

Believers, who, from the Word of God and their experience, have not sufficiently become acquainted with their impotence, rely upon their own strength. Even though they believe and confess otherwise, this negative frame proceeds from themselves. In doing so, they are not suggesting that they have not given the Lord reason to desert them—which is certainly the truth—but that they do not believe the Lord’s hand to be in it. Instead, they believe that their soul is turned from God due to their neglect and inordinate desires. Thus, they secretly imagine that all will come to rights again by their own activity if they would but engage themselves, believing that they would most certainly perish if they were to neglect to do so. Others, however, who tangibly perceive this to be the work of God (namely, that He withdraws His normal support), immediately disown their spiritual state and believe it to be an evidence of God’s wrath, and a declaration that their eternal judgment is pending—and are thus filled with fear and terror. They therefore will neglect almost all use of the means, being of the opinion that there is no hope, and they are thus consumed by despondency. There are but few who remain silent and possess their soul in patience, look to heaven for help, continue to seek even though they are in thick darkness, persevere, occasionally weep heartily, and desire to hope in the Lord—even if He were to slay them. Such are generally delivered earlier, and reap the most benefit from spiritual desertion.

*Desertion is the Lord’s Withdrawal of the Normal Influences of His Spirit*

It is of the greatest importance to know that it is the Lord who, in the state of desertion, withdraws His normal operation, infusion of grace, illumination, and comfort. In the Word of God this is represented with a variety of expressions, each of which are expressive of a specific manner of desertion:

(1) *to return*: “I will go and return to My place” (Hos 5:15); “I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake (*that is, succumbed due to shame and sorrow*)” (Song 5:6);

(2) *to forsake*: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee” (Isa 54:7); “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Ps 22:1);

(3) *to hide*: “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and

smote him: I hid Me” (Isa 57:17); “How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?” (Ps 13:1);

(4) *to forget*: “How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?” (Ps 13:1);

(5) *to restrain*: “Where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?” (Isa 63:15);

(6) *to keep silence; to hold one’s peace*: “Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God” (Ps 83:1);

(7) *to stand afar*: “Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?” (Ps 10:1);

(8) *to shut up*: “Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah” (Ps 77:9);

(9) *to cast off*: “Lord, why castest Thou off my soul? why hidest Thou Thy face from me?” (Ps 88:14);

(10) *to be wrathful*: “Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off” (Ps 88:16).

From all this it is evident that believers do not always bring themselves into a state of being estranged from God due to their misbehavior—even though this may be the case at other times. Rather, it can be that God also hides Himself from His side and departs for a season, withholding His illuminating, comforting, and sanctifying operations.

This is a most grievous and distressing condition. I pity all those who are in it; I commiserate with them. Even though God preserves His own from eternal condemnation, He does yet permit them to taste somewhat of it. Damnation consists in the missing of God’s countenance, the sense of His wrath, and all manner of pain in soul and body. An unconverted person does not know what it is to miss God, for he has never experienced the sweetness of having had communion with God. He always finds something in this life whereby he can entertain and refresh himself. To be utterly destitute, however, to have a howling heart after it has been filled, to be without any expectation that this emptiness shall be filled, and then to miss God is a hell in the soul—even when man is yet outside of hell. God’s children, however, who are acquainted with and who have tasted that it is good to be near unto the Lord, when they are deserted by God, and not only must miss fellowship with God, but also must experience that God is withdrawing Himself, and who, instead of enjoying His favor, must experience God’s wrath and rejection, succumb when they experience this. “I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand” (Ps 39:10). Then their “heart panteth” (Ps 38:10). Then their condition is as expressed

by Asaph: “I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed” (Ps 77:3).

It is nearly impossible to express all these disturbing thoughts and sorrowful motions within. We shall nevertheless present some, so that they who are thus may know that they are not alone in this (which they generally believe to be the case). Furthermore, we do so in order that they may know that there is reason for their sorrow, and that they—their condition having been held before them—would become tender and begin to weep, for this will refresh their soul. This will yet engender hope that at one time they will return to God.

#### *Particular Aspects of Being in a Deserted State*

It is no wonder that you are so troubled, for:

First, your Father hides Himself. How perplexed a child is whose father and mother have departed, leaving the child in a lonely and dark place! How this child will cry! And if someone were to ask, “Why are you crying,” the child would answer, “My father and mother are gone.” Has your heavenly Father also departed—your Father with whom you so intimately shared your need, before whom you could bring your desire with supplication, who used to answer and comfort you in such a familiar manner, and to whom you customarily cried out, “My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?” Poor child, has your beloved Father departed? One will say, “If only I knew that God was my Father, then I would melt away.”

Secondly, your Jesus—your Beloved—your Bridegroom has departed. If one were to ask you, “Why are you so sorrowful,” would you then not answer, “My Beloved who used to kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; under whose shadow I used to sit; whose fruit was sweet to my mouth; who led me into the banqueting house; who waved His banner of love over me; who was all my delight; upon whom I used to lean as my Beloved; and of whom I used to boast, *His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely* Song 5:16—He who is my Beloved and my friend has departed, and therefore I am so sorrowful.”

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit refrains His influences, and thus what light, comfort, and joy can you then have? There can be nothing other than sorrow, unrest, and anxiety. “For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me” (Lam 1:16).

Fourthly, a deserted soul is in the dark, is surrounded by darkness, walks in darkness, and does not know where she is going. Wherever she turns, she suffers a setback and stumbles over the

smallest thing, for the Lord who is her light has departed from her. The Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is gone down. The Dayspring from on high does not shine upon her, and the renowned Morning Star does not arise in her heart. This causes her to be sorrowful, anxious, and full of fear.

Fifthly, she is weak and impotent, for the Lord who is the strength of her life has departed. She is ill, for the Lord Jesus her Physician has departed from her. There is no balm in Gilead for her healing, and therefore she is ready to die.

Sixthly, she is desperate and knows not what to undertake. Now she seeks it here and then there, but she knows not where to find it. The Lord Jesus, whose name is *Counselor* and who used to counsel her so sweetly in her perplexities, directing her to the way and to the means (always having fared so well in doing so), leaves her to herself and refuses to give her counsel. Therefore no matter what way she enters upon, she finds herself at a loss and is entangled in all manner of snares.

Seventhly, she would desire to turn to God and indeed begins to do so, but she is not able. The way is fenced up, enclosed with hewn stone, and encompassed by thorns, which she cannot penetrate, for the Lord Jesus who is the way, without whom no one can come to the Father, has departed. The Holy Spirit does not help in her infirmities and does not groan within her with groanings that cannot be uttered. Even when she prays, the Lord encompasses Himself with a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate, and when she calls, He does not answer her at all. And thus she must depart again without comfort.

Eighthly, when she takes refuge to the Word of God in order to derive some comfort from it, it is a closed Book for her. She finds nothing there for herself. Her eyes may indeed fall upon a passage of Scripture, but it disturbs her, and that which should lift her up has the opposite effect, casting her down. The Word of God is nothing more to her than a fire and a two-edged sword. It neither makes an impression nor does it have an effect upon her, for the Spirit neither joins Himself to it, nor works by means of it, and therefore it is not efficacious.

Ninthly, the enemies attack her from all sides, and everyone of them gets the advantage over her. Every arrow hits, Satan is successful in every attack, all the scorn of the world wounds her, and every manifestation of a sinful desire draws her away. She is thus as a bird caught in the snare, for her King has forsaken her and does not go into battle with her. The Lord, who is her shield, has departed and lets her stand without protection.

Tenthly, if only it were true that the soul in all this were as yet always sensible, tender, and able to cry. But no, despondency makes her numb, closes her heart, and she is, so to speak, frozen solid in a harsh winter. The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus, who formerly caused the heart to burn within, neither set her aflame any longer nor baptize her with fire. The fountain of life has been stopped and water no longer issues forth.

Eleventhly, all this would cause more stirring within if we could but believe ourself to be a child of God. Here is, however, the primary source of anxiety: We then believe that we are not elected, never had grace, have nothing more than external illumination, and have indeed been cast away by God in His wrath. We furthermore believe that God will never be gracious to us, but that He will condemn us forever. This sense of hopelessness therefore makes us so dead and insensitive, that not a thing can move us any more. All we feel is the fatal wound in our heart. Or else we shall be so tossed about by despair that we, feeling hell so to speak, begin to entertain all manner of desperate thoughts and words. This will aggravate our sorrow to such an extent that we shall be fretful and we shall not be able to silently resign ourselves.

Thus the poor soul languishes, is as a woman forsaken, grieves in spirit, is oppressed, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. And thus her life is consumed by sorrow and her years with sighing. If the Lord did not secretly sustain her, what would then come of it all? The Lord keeps her in His power, however, and by reason of His unchangeable grace and goodness to her, will restore her again, reveal Himself to her again, and will by renewal speak to her heart and comfort her. “For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him” Isa 57:16,18-19.

When God’s children encounter a trial of some sort, they are not satisfied to know that it is from the Lord—with which they ought to be satisfied, knowing it to be the good, holy, and benevolent will of God with which their will ought to agree with delight, even if it were with tears in their eyes. However, they also wish to know the reason, not so much because they desire to know how they can improve their condition from their side, but to sit in judgment about the dealings of God and judge whether God’s dealings are righteous. For they reason as follows: “If I am a child

of God, reconciled through Christ, loved of God, and an heir of eternal life, and if God does not deal thus with His other children, who prosper in body and soul, why then does God deal with me thus?" They would then conclude, "I am not a child of God," doing so more in fretfulness than in earnest. Therefore, it is commonly their question: "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2). Even though you need not know any reasons—for God does not give an account of His deeds—I shall nevertheless give you some.

### *How God Is Glorified in Desertion*

First, *God wills thus to be glorified*. There are others beside you who will observe how God deals with you.

(1) It is to you and them that God wants to show *His sovereignty and freeness* in manifesting His mercy to whomever and whenever He wills. The fact that He receives you and passes others by; that you know God in Christ; that you strive to receive Jesus unto justification and sanctification; and that you have the principle of spiritual life within you, whereas others are deprived of this—all of this is not your work, but is due to the sovereign grace of God. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom 9:15). This is the lesson the angels and believers who are acquainted with your condition learn. You will learn this lesson while in your straits, God is glorified by others by it, and He will also be glorified by you concerning this. If we were always to live in the enjoyment of spiritual embrace, we would secretly imagine that we were entitled to this—as if it were in our power to keep ourself near to God. Upon missing it, however, we learn to know the sovereignty of God, and we learn to acknowledge and love it. Then the thought ceases, "Why am I not as another person is?" Then we learn, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan 4:35). To learn this is worth some anxiety.

(2) The Lord thus reveals *the greatness of His mercy*. Not only does one become acquainted with himself as to how sinful and unworthy he is of the least grace and what a wonder it is that God would look upon him in grace; but he also knows and acknowledges that all is empty and that nothing but God can satisfy him. Oh, the mercy of God becomes so precious to him! If he may be the object of mercy, he is able and willing to miss everything, for if he must miss God, he must die for sorrow. To learn this, that is, to esteem

God above his own supreme happiness, is indeed worth the occasional experience of desertion.

(3) The Lord thus demonstrates *His holiness and righteousness*, and His aversion for sin. Furthermore, the Lord hereby shows that, even though the believer is pleasing to Him in Christ, his corruption nevertheless displeases Him. His eyes are too pure than that they would behold evil. Believers must perceive that God is righteous in dealing with them thus—yes, that God would be righteous if He would forsake them and eternally cast them away from before His countenance, “that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (Ps 51:4). To perceive and embrace this is indeed worthy of the experience of some measure of sorrow.

(4) The Lord thus reveals *His immutability, faithfulness, longsuffering and truthfulness*. All this is confirmed by the fact that God bears with the believer in his wrong and foolish actions while being subject to His chastisement; and that God secretly supports and upholds him during this desertion so that his spiritual life is not extinguished, neither does he succumb to despair nor break forth with abominable words and deeds. God neither casts him away, nor deserts him excessively, but is still with him when he must go through the water and the fire; He restores him, and by renewal causes him to taste the mercies he previously enjoyed.

We may previously have believed in, and have acknowledged all these perfections. However, by way of spiritual desertion we shall become acquainted with them experientially. Such knowledge, such acknowledgement, and such worship far exceeds what we had before this. It is true that during a time of desertion we do not perceive all this very well, but we shall experience this subsequently. “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee” (Job 42:5). Thus, spiritual desertion is subservient to the glory of God.

#### *God’s Children Benefit from Desertion*

Secondly, *spiritual desertion will serve the best interest of God’s children*. This is not only because they thus become better acquainted with the perfections of God and glorify them more, but:

(1) They thus also *become better acquainted with themselves*. They perceive their sinful nature and deeds; how abominable they are before God, angels, and men; what they are worthy of; and what they should expect if God were to deal with them according to their conduct. This causes the soul to sink away in humility and in her nothingness. The soul experiences her impotence, neither

being able to lift herself up by faith, nor being able to comfort herself thereby. Thus, if she is to be restored, her restoration must come from the Lord alone, without there being the least worthiness in her.

(2) Hereby they learn *to esteem grace all the more highly*. The crumbs which they previously did not regard, the least longing for the Lord Jesus, the least sigh, the feeblest prayer, the smallest measure of light, and the smallest measure of hope now appear exceedingly precious to them, presently refresh them, and they thank the Lord for them. They thus become all the *more careful to preserve grace*. They actively will seek to preserve what they have in order that they may continue to enjoy the love of God and His communion. When Hezekiah, after his sorrow, by renewal enjoyed comfort, he said, “What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul” (Isa 38:15). When the bride found her bridegroom again after having been deserted by him, she said, “I held him, and would not let him go” (Song 3:4).

(3) They are thus weaned from the world and all creatures. They no longer cleave to it, nor do they desire it. They have no need for it, and expect nothing from man. They only make use of the means as a matter of obedience—not as if thereby to obtain their desires, as if they were contingent upon these means. Time and again they turn to the Lord as their portion and their resting place, saying, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Ps 73:28-26); “But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps 73:28).

(4) Hereby the Lord makes known to the world and His children what graces He has planted in them, thus manifesting His omnipotence, goodness, faithfulness, and immutability. How would we have ever been acquainted with Job’s patience, unless he had been in those trying circumstances? How would we have known about Abraham’s faith and obedience, unless he had been subjected to those severe trials? Such is also the case when believers must experience desertion. Everyone who receives knowledge of this and interacts with them, will perceive from their actions that they despise the world and all that is in it, that they deem all their comfort to consist in having communion with God, and that the only reason for their mourning is that they must miss communion with God. This is further confirmed when, upon having been restored, it is perceived how they emerge from this trial; how they are as tried gold coming out of the fire; how fearful they are of sin; how majestic and

glorious God is in their eyes; how precious Jesus is to them; how godly, humble, longsuffering, compassionate, and obliging they are; how encouraged they are in the Lord; and how they trust in Him. And thus everyone will be astonished about their change. This will be to the conviction of worldly people. It will teach God's children to understand the Lord's ways, make them strong to hope upon the Lord in trials, motivate them to thank and glorify the Lord, and also stir them up to fear and serve the Lord increasingly.

Tell me now—you who have asked for reasons why the Lord brings desertion upon His children—do not these reasons express the wisdom and goodness of God, and is it not beneficial?

*Objection:* God can grant all this without bringing desertion upon them.

*Answer:* They could not have been acquainted with all this in an experiential way, and it would be as much as to ask: "Why doesn't God make His children perfect from the moment of their birth? Why doesn't God take His children to heaven in their childhood?" There is no other way for me to answer you than by saying, "It is the wisdom and the goodness of God." By way of His dealings, angels and men thus attain to a greater measure of felicity, greater admiration, and are rendered more fit to answer to their purpose of glorifying God in His perfections as they are revealed in Christ.

### *Desertion: Due to Specific Sins*

Thirdly, *God will at times desert His children due to specific sins.* God will not desert his children because of their daily weaknesses and offenses; however, He will do so due to certain specific sins.

(1) He will do so for great sins which, in spite of many inner warnings, are deliberately committed against the conscience, and which cause great offense. Such is true for adultery, this being the reason why David had to experience desertion Ps 51. Desertion will also occur when we—in order to gratify our lust for dominance, honor, money, and whatever else there may be—conspire with the world and the men of the world, and thus forsake God's cause and His children, conducting ourselves as if we were one with the world, or engage in evil practices by way of lying and hypocrisy. It will be observed that God deserts such in regard to their internal comforts and their sanctification. Externally He will bring upon them shame, contempt, and distress; loss of husband, wife, children, health, and goods; and He will cause them to die in fear.

(2) He will do so if we become proud in civil life, and if in the spiritual realm we pride ourselves in our gifts, knowledge, and grace; if we wish to be esteemed as a great person in the church

and seek the praise of others. We do so if inwardly, and with our behavior, we despise those among the godly who either have a lower station in the world, or are not as advanced in grace; and if we envy those who either have a higher position in the world or a greater measure of grace and gifts than we ourselves have. In this way—in thought, word, and deed—we stir up those emotions that beget envy. Pride is a dreadful thing which God cannot tolerate. “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5).

(3) He will do so if we esteem the grace of God and communion with Him of little value—not judgmentally, for that cannot be, but rather with our will, and in our practice and conduct. Such is true when we begin to love the world, halt between two opinions, and are divided in our heart and love: God something and the world something. If we thus neglect to seek God with our whole heart, with earnestness and zeal, and as the only One whom we desire; if we lightly omit our scheduled devotions or conduct them hastily in order to pacify our conscience and to assure ourselves of our salvation; if we do not open to a Jesus who is knocking, but let Him stand before the door, thereby demonstrating that communion with Him is but of little value, being without desire to make any effort; and if we grieve but little over our backsliding—then it is as if God says: “If I am worth that little to you, go your way; enjoy and entertain yourself in the world.” God will then withdraw Himself and allow this person to fend for himself.

(4) He will do so if we become conceited and depart from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, being desirous to have something new. We shall then engage ourselves in study in order to gain in wisdom and to acquire knowledge. Spiritual matters are too common, as they concern matters about which we are already knowledgeable and have frequently heard about. All that is new we readily embrace, regardless of whether it is truth or not. We then imagine that only now the light has dawned upon us, we have become wise, have become steadfast in the faith, and have overcome our previous dragging of our feet. We then mock with those who live tenderly and have strife. We turn our backs upon such and join ourselves to those who likewise enjoy this new-found light, irrespective of whether they fear the Lord or not. We are then at liberty and have freedom to do all that which previously smote our conscience. We are then able to boast as the world does, and do as the world does, while imagining that we are increasing wondrously. In the meantime, however, God sends a leanness into the soul. Since we do not embrace internal spiritual truths with more heartfelt love,

God does at times also leave us to go our own way, not allowing us to proceed beyond the letter, and thus decrease our understanding of the spiritual dimension. Happy are they who remember from whence they have fallen, repent, and do their first works. It is rare, however, that such regain their initial level of spirituality.

### *Restoration for Those in Spiritual Desertion*

Having presented to you spiritual desertion in its nature, consequences, and causes, we now wish to be of assistance to such and help them out of this grievous condition—even though it is a difficult task. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Prov 18:14). It is, however, the duty of the strong to assist the weak and to lift up those who are bowed down. God also frequently blesses the means above expectation. Words, the strongest encouragements, the most serious exhortations, and the most effective arguments are not sufficient to that end. Deserted persons are too destitute of strength to be lifted up by this. The God who has deserted them must by renewal visit and take them by the hand. God occasionally does this in an immediate manner, infusing new grace solely by the Holy Spirit, and quickening residual grace—and they are thus restored, so to speak, in a moment. Sometimes God does this by way of external circumstances and events, which in and of themselves are not capable of being a means to that end. However, God generally uses His read or spoken Word for this purpose, which is applied to them. In order that we might be a means to your restoration, we shall propose some comforts and then give you some guidance.

Prior to this, however, I would like to ask those who are in a state of desertion the following questions: “Do you desire to be delivered from this condition? Are you desirous that the Lord would clear up your darkness and shine upon you with His light; that the Lord would assure you of having been adopted as His child and of being an heir of eternal life; that the Lord would say unto your soul, *I am thy salvation*, call you by name, and declare to you that you have found grace in His eyes; that the Lord would lovingly embrace your soul and cast all your sins behind His back; and that the Lord Jesus would kiss you with the kisses of His mouth and manifest His love to you? Are you desirous to again weep sweet tears, pray, believe, have loving fellowship with Him and to walk in tender piety before His countenance?” What is your answer? If you answer in the affirmative, then I ask you, “Is this true and do you really mean it?” Do you again answer “Yes,” with the sigh, “I wish it were so, but I cannot expect this”? However, there is hope in this

respect; that is, only if you are willing to be delivered. If you are indeed willing, then with composure listen to the following:

The deserted person does not believe that he is a child of God and a recipient of grace. He thinks that if he were able to believe that, he would be enabled to persevere courageously in this darkness, even if it pleased the Lord not to permit him to feel His grace and comforts. Although he would very much desire this, he would nevertheless cleave to the Lord. It is thus our first task to convince the deserted person that he has grace.

First, reflect upon the days of old. Do you still remember when you were entirely in the state of nature, and neither knew God nor sought Him? Proceed and reflect upon the way which led to your change, and subsequently upon the change you have experienced. Reflect upon the prayers you offered, the tears you wept, that wrestling with and fleeing unto Jesus, that receiving of Him unto reconciliation and godliness. Furthermore, consider the insight you received concerning God and the way of salvation, and how much this differed from the knowledge of natural men. You perceived that with all their knowledge, they were as yet blind. Proceed by considering what your general objective was; how there was the fear of God, a tenderness of conscience, sensitivity toward sin, a repeated seeking of forgiveness; what a love for God, His service, and His children you then had. Furthermore, you then had an awareness in your soul of quietness, peace, hope, occasional assurance, and a sweet inclination toward God. You know these things to be true; now, set aside the sinfulness which cleaves to all God's children, consider these matters in their essential nature, and draw a conclusion from all this. Is there then no evidence that you did possess true grace? You will certainly not be able to say that it was hypocrisy, knowing that in all this you were dealing with God, and that your heart frequently bore witness that your conduct was in truth. You will also not be able to say that all this was but the result of external illumination and a mere work of nature. At that time you perceived the difference between yourself and those who had but external light. The fact that you are presently desirous to experience these motions again proves that you still deem all that to have been in truth, even though you impulsively speak and think otherwise. Would you not consider someone to be a gracious person if you were to hear, without his knowledge, how he wrestled with God in prayer, and if you knew his heart to be as such? This proves again that you consider your previous condition to be gracious. Therefore, proceed with your work in truth and conclude that the work in you has been in truth. Turn with this to the Holy Scriptures and believe

that the gifts of God and His calling are without repentance, that He will also finish the good work He has begun in you, and that He will not forsake the work of His hands.

Secondly, consider your present state, and you will yet detect grace in it, as despairing as you may be of your condition. Also here you are to deal truthfully, even as if you were judging someone else.

(1) You have light, know the way of salvation in Christ, are acquainted with having spiritual communion with God, and know what it is to have true dealings with God. Not only do you know what faith is, but you also know how a believing soul functions. You are acquainted with the nature of inner, spiritual life; as well as that which differs from it. Your knowledge of all this is not due to the drawing of some obscure conclusion; that is, by concluding the one thing from the other. Rather, you are acquainted with the essential nature of these things, and your knowledge is such that it engenders esteem and love, together with a desire to possess them—even if they are of no comfort to you at the present.

(2) Why are you sorrowful? It is indeed not because you lack something in this world, but rather due to God being distant, Jesus having departed, and your having been forsaken. You are not merely and primarily motivated by a fear of being damned. If you were assured of the fact that you would not be damned and had everything in the world which you would desire, would you then be satisfied and would your sorrow then cease? Indeed not! This question will stimulate your inclination, and with all your heart you will declare, “I am sorrowful because I miss God, and I cannot be happy as long as I cannot draw near to Him. If that were to take place, I would be happy.” However, to perceive the deficiency of life *is* life, and sorrow over that which is lacking is a sure evidence of love. Such mourners are pronounced blessed, and to them pertains the promise of comfort, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matt 5:4).

(3) Add to this those heartfelt desires which go out after God. If you think upon having sweet communion with God, union with Christ, a walking in love, obedience, and the service of God; and you think to yourself, “If once again I were thus”—doesn’t that enliven your soul? Does that set your affections in motion, and would they not mount upward with wings if despondency did not hinder them in this? And as hopeless as your condition is, can you keep from lifting your eyes on high? Are you able to refrain entirely from praying? What do you then desire? This indeed shows that you desire to have something—something from God. Your heart will confess that it is God Himself, and you are thus to be convinced that your

desires are after God Himself. Desire proceeds from love, however, and the promise is: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt 5:6).

Thirdly, acknowledge the intermittent comforts which the Lord grants you in the midst of your desertion.

(1) Upon entering church a fitting word is spoken which touches you. You are sensibly moved, wholeheartedly receive Jesus, the wall of separation between God and you is removed, you receive an opened door and free access to God, and you have freedom to address Him as “Abba, Father!” It may be that you join the fellowship of the godly, and behold, the Lord reveals to you there that He is present, for your soul becomes lively. It is as if the darkness disappears, and as if you are fully restored.

(2) Has the Lord not occasionally visited you in your sleep so that you were awake while sleeping? You were able to pray, were comforted, became lively, and upon awaking your sleep had been sweet. Yes, do you long for such nights, because your soul is not in a better frame than when asleep? This will occur occasionally; however, also the opposite can be true, as Job testifies in (Job 7:14).

(3) It may also occasionally occur while you are in solitude—be it in your room or in the field—that your heart is sweetly moved by God’s Spirit—yes, the tears will flow, and there will be a calling upon and a cleaving unto the Lord. The Lord may at times visit you with comforts, assurances, and joy. You who have experienced this, however, is this not a sure evidence that the Lord neither has nor will forsake you? Strengthen yourself with this and persevere by faith when life and light are lacking, and it readily becomes dark again.

Fourthly, be it known that it is God’s common way to cause His children to occasionally experience desertions—particularly those whom He desires to give an additional measure of grace for the purpose of growth and comfort. Nothing strange is befalling you, for God does not deal with you any differently from His other children. Perhaps you do not have the opportunity to have fellowship with such, and when you meet someone who is in such a condition, you are amazed that there are more who have come into such circumstances as you. It is as if this gives you some courage, and I tell you from experience that God generally deals with His children in this manner. Every person has his cross, whether they are pious or not. However, this particular cross is reserved for the godly only. Others have no knowledge of this; they ridicule it and consider it a case of melancholy and foolishness. We may thus even conclude from bearing this cross that the Lord has bestowed grace upon us, even though this will be difficult for us to do. Therefore, be not

troubled by this, but bow yourself, and humble yourself under the mighty hand of the Lord so that He may exalt you in due time.

Fifthly, the Lord will most certainly grant deliverance and restore you. He has done so to others, even though those who have not behaved themselves all that well during their trial will not be fully restored in this life. However, they will receive this in heaven. Therefore, take courage and focus upon the promises of God. “In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours. ... And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isa 54:8,11,13); “For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies” (Lam 3:31-32).

Therefore, neither let the consolations of God be small to you, nor ignore His promises—they are true. Others have experienced this to be so and their faith has been strengthened that much more; the Lord will also return your sense of comfort to you. Thus you may strengthen your heart with God’s promise: Though He tarry, wait for Him; because He will surely come, He will not tarry (Hab 2:3).

### *Guidance in Desertion*

It now remains to give some guidance to those who are experiencing desertion, as well as to those who are called to deal with such persons. A deserted person has to be on guard against certain things and has to practice certain things. The person who is deserted must refrain himself from:

(1) Disqualifying his preceding state; that is, his conduct Godward, and God’s work in him. In so doing he would declare the work of the Holy Spirit to be a lie, which is a dreadful sin. He is not capable of judging this now as well as when he had spiritual enjoyment and light. If he cannot presently ascertain this, he must ultimately let matters be and say, “I presently cannot judge about this.” In his present condition he cannot conclude that all that has transpired in the past was not right. True children of God do indeed experience desertion, as has been shown above.

(2) Being insensitive toward and hardening himself against the Lord; that is, as if he did not wish to take this chastisement to heart—adjusting himself to the fact that if God is not comforting him, he can do without this comfort. This would greatly displease the Lord. “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast

consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock” (Jer 5:3).

(3) Murmuring and being fretful. “If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38); “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction” (Prov 3:11). When you are thus, the Lord will not be moved to help you, and the cross will be doubly heavy for you.

(4) Despair and despondency, thinking: “The Lord has made me the object of His wrath; it is done with me, and my hope has vanished.” This in turn begets fretful, inappropriate, and evil thoughts. Do not say, “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord” (Lam 3:18). Be on guard for the inner turmoil of Job. “My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it” (Job 7:15-16). Rather, follow his example when he said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15). Quiet patience is pleasing to God.

(5) Neglecting the means: the reading of God’s Word, singing, the hearing of God’s Word, and prayer. This would be identical to a person being faint for hunger not wanting to eat due to being faint.

(6) Seeking any other comfort outside of God, entertaining yourself by eating, drinking, recreation, entertaining company, etc., and thus seeking rest in that—even though bodily refreshment can at times be a means to the enlivening of the spirit. Furthermore, be on guard against yielding to other sentiments and errors which cause one to proceed no further than judgmental knowledge, while fully neglecting a tender walk with God, and thus avoiding all spiritual struggle.

The deserted person must also *practice* certain things. I shall not prescribe many means here, for they are as difficult to perform as the matter itself. Consider only the following:

First, strive very much for quiet and patient subjection to the Lord’s dealings. To be humble, to mourn as a dove which has lost its partner, and to chatter as a swallow, coming before the Lord in such a frame while longing for Him, is the appropriate disposition in these trials, and it is a fit disposition for the Lord to work in you. “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope” (Lam 3:28-29).

Secondly, if we become aware that the Lord has withdrawn Himself due to a specific sin—some of which we have identified earlier—then it is of critical importance that we wholeheartedly repent from that sin, deeply humble ourselves, abhor ourselves, confess it with sorrow, justify God for withdrawing Himself because of that sin, and be resolved to refrain from such sin in the

future. We must then look unto the blood of Jesus in order to obtain reconciliation thereby, and pray for forgiveness. For how can the chastisement be removed as long as we do not humble ourselves over the causes and turn from them? When David was heavily oppressed so that the hand of the Lord was upon him day and night, and his moisture was changed into the drought of summer, he said, “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Ps 32:5).

Thirdly, continue to practice your devotions habitually as you did in former days. Do not neglect this and do it to the best of your ability. Read the Word, even if you neither have the least desire to do so, nor are moved in the least by it. Bend your knees as you are accustomed to do, and pray as best as you know how—even if you were to read a psalm prayerfully. If your soul is overwhelmed, do not walk away from this; and if inner strife intensifies, then endure it (as you would sit out a hailstorm). If you say, “This is but mechanical activity which cannot be pleasing to the Lord,” then I reply, “Go on in performing your task mechanically.” The Lord knows your motivating principle to be spiritual. He knows that you are neither satisfied with but a mechanical performance, nor a serving of Him as such, but that you are using it as the ordained means to receive help. Continue in your temporal calling and do not resign from it. Maintain fellowship with the godly, and exhort others as you have done aforetime. If you thus perform this duty, then it will be a means to you for not becoming estranged any further—yes, you will gradually be corrected by it.

Fourthly, become accustomed to living by faith. I am not speaking here of the exercise of faith in which there is utmost clarity, but of that faith by which we cleave to the Lord. Perhaps you cannot assure yourself that you are in the state of grace, but you nevertheless believe that the Lord Jesus offers Himself to a lost sinner, and that therefore whosoever will, may and must receive Him. Rely upon this expectantly, in a waiting frame, exercising faith, and surrendering yourself—even though you may neither find light nor comfort. Do not say, “It is too late, and for me there is no hope.” Rather, reply by saying, “It is a lie; I am yet alive, I still have the Word of God, and I am indeed willing if I could but find Him.” Do not yield to unbelieving thoughts, but rely upon the Word of God and you will at last experience that the Lord will again visit you in this way.

Those *who must deal with those who are in a state of desertion*, must pay attention as to how they deal with them, for the Lord will take

note of this. He loves His children who are in a state of desertion, and if anyone adds grief to their grief, and if anyone deserts them as well, it will displease Him. Therefore, first of all refrain from:

(1) Judging them as if they were greater sinners than others, or as if they were living in an abominable sin—be it that you either condemn them in your heart, with your countenance and conduct, or in word. This was the sin of the friends of Job, who were rebuked by the Lord concerning this.

(2) Ridiculing and mocking with them as if they were going insane and were giving in to illusions and melancholy. This would greatly arouse God's wrath against you.

(3) Giving them evil advice, suggesting that they depart from the way of tender godliness, saying, "That is what you get if you wish to be such a wise person, be so considerate, and stand above others. Come, live as others do; give yourself some diversion, and entertain yourself together with us. Live as other people and all these illusions will disappear." Worldly people will thus deal with them. God observes this, however, and it displeases Him; they will receive their judgment upon this.

(4) Being without hope as far as their restoration is concerned, saying, "It is useless; there is no sense in trying. Whatever one does for them is all fruitless." There is indeed hope for their restoration, but the power to restore such is neither to be found in you nor in your words. Instead, the Lord uses others to restore such by means of their dealings with them.

Secondly,

(1) Join yourself to them instead, even if it were but to show your love by your presence, thereby encouraging such deserted souls.

(2) Let your sentiment concerning their sorrowful condition be tempered and let your conduct be consistent with this. On the one hand you must not be insensitive, and on the other hand, be not fainthearted, lest such a deserted soul be grieved or become even more fainthearted.

(3) Show your compassion as well as your inclination to help them bear this.

(4) Use your ability—as little as it may be—to comfort and encourage them.

(5) Pray for such souls, and occasionally pray with them—as capable or incapable as you may be—and do so daily in your closet. This will be pleasing to the Lord. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Ps 41:1).



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## CHAPTER NINETY-TWO

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### Concerning the Temptation Toward Atheism, or the Denial of God's Existence

The just shall live by faith. Faith is that which renders spiritual life active. It is the most beneficial for a godly person. Unbelief, however, causes him most harm. Unbelief causes the internal corruptions of the heart to manifest themselves, gives the world a great advantage over him, makes him vulnerable for the attacks of the devil, hinders him in approaching unto God in prayer, robs him of all peace and inner rest, prevents all sanctification, is displeasing to God, and restrains the Lord from working within him. In one word, unbelief is the cancer of the soul and is a most wretched disposition. Since believers are at times in this condition, we shall therefore consider this disease in its harmful nature, so that everyone may be on guard against it and no one may yield to it. Furthermore, we shall endeavor to restore those who have become subject to this condition. We shall neither speak of the unbelief of the unconverted, nor of saving faith, nor of the feebleness and weakness always inherent in the faith of even the very best, nor of the short relapses during a given exercise of faith. Rather, we shall speak of the overwhelming and prevailing power of historical unbelief which causes spiritual life to decay and brings it, so to speak, to the brink of death. The focus of this unbelief is either God, the Word of God, the spiritual state of the believer, the promises, or God's dealings with the believer.

#### *The Temptation Toward Atheism Is Common*

The temptation toward atheism is a more common tribulation for believers than one may think—especially for those who have a keen intellect. For many this is a concealed matter, so that they

do not clearly perceive it to be the case. Nevertheless, it is the cause of not gleaning much comfort and peace from faith. Others do indeed perceive it, but conceal it, being of the opinion that no one else is acquainted with such an abomination, and that everyone would despise them for such evil thoughts. Sometimes there are the sudden interjections: “Is there indeed a God? Is there indeed a heaven or a hell? Is my soul indeed immortal? Is all this nothing more than an illusion and imagination?” Some immediately reject such interjections, without them causing much harm. Others begin to reflect upon them, whereby this bent toward atheism increases, shoots forth deeper roots, becomes a torment, and becomes detrimental to religious exercise. Others are more oppressed by this and it becomes a prevailing disposition. False arguments against the existence of God present themselves; one cannot conclude that God exists; prayer either begins to wane or lose its potency. Such thoughts immediately become an obstacle and the faith residing in the heart cannot be exercised, nor is there any benefit derived from the hearing or reading of the Word. This is followed by great anxiety of heart, grievous sorrow, fear, and trembling. This can be caused by the residual love of God in the heart which cannot tolerate this; or at other times it can be in response to the evil and abominableness of this sin or due to the prospect of eternal damnation. Such a person will wrestle against this, but will not be able to overcome it; it has the upper hand. Indeed, the soul of some becomes so worn out and despondent in this battle, that it appears that they no longer resist such thoughts. Previously there was still a desire to believe and some resistance; however, such a person has now succumbed, and his spiritual life is, so to speak, listless. This is not because he delights in this condition, but rather due to having become despondent and powerless. This can occasionally last for a long time—yes, even for successive years. At times there can be periods of intermission, however. The soul may then occasionally receive some strength to turn those thoughts away, prevail in prayer, and receive some sweet comforts. It thus appears as if she has overcome. Such intermissions especially occur when we are engaged in instructing, exhorting, and comforting others. Yet, this temptation has not passed, and such a person can readily succumb to it again. Sometimes such a person may gradually make some progress, but he will as yet be so weak that he does not dare to believe that such is the case. A sudden impulse and a falling into sin can cause the temptation to regain strength.

#### *The Various Causes for this Wretched Condition*

There are various causes for this wretched condition.

(1) Sometimes it pleases the Lord to try a person for a season by hiding Himself and leaving him over to himself.

(2) Sometimes it is the consequence of an infrequent reading of God's Word.

(3) Sometimes it is caused by a neglect of our scheduled devotions, a hasty observance of them, and a failure to acquaint ourselves with God.

(4) Sometimes it is caused by a yielding to sin—be it in our daily walk, or when we sin expressly against our conscience, and thus done more boldly.

(5) Sometimes it is caused by our prayers not being answered. We may either be subject to a cross of exceptional magnitude, or we may have a very strong desire for a given matter. We may pray earnestly and in a persevering manner, take hold of the promises, and yet not obtain the matter. This will engender despondency or a secret fretfulness. This can then be accompanied by the following thoughts: "If there were a God, He would help me. I can see that it makes no difference whether I pray or not."

(6) Sometimes it can be caused by yielding to an intellectual desire to penetrate too deeply into the matter of God's essence, His timeless eternity, His dimensionless infinity, as well as other of His perfections. Our intellect is too puny and the infinite God too exalted. If we occupy ourselves with reflecting upon God beyond what is permissible, we shall be as those who directly look into the sun and thereby immediately become blinded, so that they are unable to see what they were previously able to see with clarity. If, however, we insist on comprehending the "how" of God's existence with our puny intellect—that is, His eternity, omnipotence, infinity, etc.—and we cannot do this (not being able to do this), this will beget bewilderment and doubt as to whether God does indeed exist and truly has such a nature. This then affords our heart the opportunity to proceed further and further in nurturing atheistic thoughts.

(7) Sometimes this can be caused by an excessive desire for extraordinary revelations of God and a more feeling impression of His perfections, desiring this not only for our spiritual delight, but also being secretly desirous to know with more certainty that He is. We are then not satisfied with the common way in which the Lord leads His children.

(8) Sometimes the devil instigates this by way of sudden interjections, subtle delusions, or external circumstances. He may also do so by way of secret whisperings, when he asks: "Is it really true; should such and such be the case?" Unbelief which is nestled in the

heart will then take hold and such a person will begin to reflect upon these thoughts.

(9) Sometimes we can come into such a condition by reading atheistic books, hearing atheistic lectures or argumentation, listening to the complaints of those who are in such a state, or by carelessly giving expression to our inner thoughts.

*Exhortations and Helpful Counsel*

Not only is such a condition grievous indeed, but it is also injurious to spiritual life. Everyone must therefore be very much on guard against such situations and resist such thoughts immediately upon their arising. Here fleeing is the best way toward victory. If one reflects upon such thoughts, wishing to rebut them with reason and to respond to the counterarguments which present themselves, one will easily be captured and conquered. Therefore, resist everything, no matter how attractive and powerful the thought may be which is being interjected. And if you are already in such a condition, do your utmost to be delivered from it and attentively reflect upon the following matters.

First, in all men—even in the most ignorant heathen—there is an acknowledgement of Deity. Are you wiser than the entire world? Confirm this truth therefore in your own mind, even if it is all dark within and you have no strength.

Secondly, most of the godly encounter this strife, especially those who are naturally endowed with a keen intellect. Should it therefore be a surprise to you that this also befalls you? Therefore, do not lose courage, for the Lord has delivered all others from this strife, and subsequently has caused them to increase in spiritual strength. The Lord will also deliver you, and you will become stronger as well.

Thirdly, consider who they are whose desire it is that there be no God and who labor to deny His existence. This is the practice of ungodly men, who do so in order that they might practice their ungodliness all the more confidently. However, you do not wish to be associated with such; you despise them. Thus, you manifest very clearly that you believe that there is a God, for if you did not believe that, you would not be disturbed upon hearing that they deny God and speak evil of Him. You would then be pleased with them, they being of one sentiment with you.

Fourthly, consider your own heart for a moment. Is not your heart troubled when you are thus tried and when such unbelieving thoughts arise in you? Is it not your wholehearted desire to be delivered from this and to serve God in faith? This clearly proves

that you believe that God exists, for otherwise you would be satisfied, and you would deem yourself happy to have been delivered from such prejudices.

Fifthly, can it be harmful to confirm that God exists? You know that the denial of God's existence can be detrimental and that a man can perish in consequence thereof. You know that believing this cannot harm you, but would engender and stimulate peace within, thus enabling you to serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

(1) Therefore, by renewal engage yourself in the task of seeking after and serving God. Presuppose the existence of God—even if you are not fully convinced within—and say, “I shall blindly make the Word of God my foundation for doing so, obligate myself to believe all that this Word says, and do what this Word prescribes.”

(2) You are thus to start from the beginning. Neither reach out for lofty matters, nor exert your intellect and mental faculties; rather, stay with the Word. Read it, and in reliance upon that Word, flee to the Lord Jesus as Surety and receive Him. Do not strain yourself to get a view of Him, however, for that would be counterproductive. Rather, do so humbly and, so to speak, with closed eyes. Rely upon Him because the Word enjoins you to do so, promising that those who put their trust in Him will not be ashamed. Likewise humbly pray and hear the Word, refrain from that which is forbidden, and perform that which is commanded. I assure you that if you thus begin to engage yourself, the Lord will gradually restore you—even though unbelieving thoughts may initially assault you vehemently, and even though you may for some time engage yourself without finding delight and sweetness in doing so.

(3) Keep your condition concealed from others, be it that they are unconverted, beginners in grace, or weak Christians—and especially from those of whom you notice that they are also under assault. Rather than being of mutual help to each other, you would cast each other down. Instead, go to an experienced minister or another godly person who is strong in faith and reveal your condition to him. Do not contradict him, however, but listen attentively to what he has to say to you and consider quietly whether it pleases the Lord to apply these words to your heart. If not, then upon your return, use the means by renewal which the Lord has instituted in His Word, doing so quietly and without much ado. Neither by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord you will be restored.



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CHAPTER NINETY-THREE

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Concerning the Temptation Whether God's Word is True

*Man's Various Opinions of the Holy Scriptures*

A small ship will sail safely over reefs upon which a large ship will crash. Such is also true for people as far as giving credence to the Word of God. Some do not look beyond the surface of the Word of God, nor do they seriously reflect upon the fact whether it is God's Word. They hear and read it as something that is beneficial in nature—and beyond that they do not know what to say about it. Such is generally true for natural men who concern themselves but little with God and religion. Others receive it as being of divine origin, doing so simply because the church and everyone else declares it to be so. They neither desire nor are able to contradict it. Such generally do not derive any benefit from the Word and leave it be for what it is.

There are people—wretches I ought to call them—who succumb to the doubt of *Descartes* and fall into his whirlpool. They are of a quick understanding in their own eyes and insist on seeing, touching, and experiencing things. Wherever some knowledge is to be acquired, they are there. They put their reason upon the judgment seat and summon the Bible before them for the purpose of cross-examination, thus demanding at the same time that God give them an explanation of what He has said. Such are punished for their blatant boldness by being given over to a strong delusion—and frequently to eternal damnation.

Some are secretly wrought upon by the Holy Ghost (unbeknown to themselves) to believe the truth of the gospel in general and that

the Scripture is of divine origin. The Word is effective upon their heart for comfort and godliness and they do not seek to know whether they are assured of its divine origin. God spares their little strength and does not subject them to these temptations. I counsel them that they proceed in their simplicity and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. They will thus enter heaven while others are battling each other.

*Many of the Godly are Subject to This Temptation*

Many of the godly, however, contrary to their wishes, become subject to doubts as to whether the Bible is the Word of God. Frequently the devil is the instigator, perhaps by way of sudden interjection: "Is this really true?" Or he may conceal himself in a subtle manner and craftily create the opportunity to arouse such thoughts, bringing forth counterfeit arguments and stirring a person up to respond to these. Thus, the safest course is to despise such suggestions and flee from them. However, such doubts also proceed from our own unbelieving heart. Sometimes one may quickly set such suggestions aside without giving heed to them; and thus they do no harm. Sometimes such suggestions have more effect, however, and we begin to entertain doubtful arguments (which I do not wish to mention here lest they gain a foothold) as they present themselves, and we reflect upon them. If this causes us to be in a dilemma and stimulates us to respond to it, we have become captives.

This begets all manner of undesirable frames such as darkness of understanding, unbelief, listlessness, restlessness, fear, and impotence. Such persons will then neither be able nor have the vigor to come to Jesus to view and receive Him as Surety. They will not be able to go to God through Him in order to be justified and they will not be able to derive comfort from any promise in the Word. The Word then neither functions as a hammer, fire, sword, or balm; nor does it nourish them. Such are kept from praying; and if they pray, it is spiritless, and the exercise of faith is nearly absent in it. All religious exercises are impeded, and they would pursue an independent religion of a natural sort, if both the spiritual light and the life yet residing in the soul did not prevent this. Since, however, this spiritual life and light cannot gain the upper hand over inherent unbelief (it being strengthened by natural reason), the soul will thus be grievously tossed back and forth. There can be neither rest nor peace in the soul, but only unsettledness and sorrow. This is not only the result of being unable to believe, pray, or engage themselves, but also because of an inability to ascertain Christ to be Surety and the complete way of salvation (for this is

the necessary consequence of doubting divine truths). They are then also tempted to reject Him as such. Their conscience will rebuke them for this as being a dreadful and abominable sin, and it will cause them to be fearful of being damned. This condition will thus inflict considerable harm upon the soul.

How such would rejoice if they could be conclusively and powerfully convinced that the Bible is God's voice, His declaration, and His Word! Since, however, this cannot be ascertained by either external senses or reason, but must be determined by faith alone, this must be the work of the Spirit of faith: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6). The Spirit reveals to the conscience of believers that the Word of God has been inspired by the Spirit of God and is the infallible truth. Nevertheless, as faith in Christ is wrought by means of the Word, God likewise also uses means to convince of the truth of the Word itself. They are but means, however, and they cannot be efficacious unless the Spirit works by those means. May the Lord therefore work in the heart of such a faltering soul as I am engaged in seeking to convince and strengthen her. In the meantime, may such a person refrain from opposing us in this. Let him rather be silent and submissively allow himself to be instructed that the Bible is God's Word.

#### *Why the Scriptures are the Inspired Word of God*

Anyone who is in his right mind and knows himself to be a human being will believe in things which are beyond that which he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. We do this daily and without misgivings when someone informs us about something. It has been drilled into our minds, and will not be erased until we die, that the Duke of Alva caused thousands of people in the Netherlands to be murdered, decapitated, hanged, and burned for the sake of religion. Furthermore, no one doubts that Rome already existed two or three thousand years prior to this date, formerly was the residence of the emperor, and presently is the seat of the pope (even though one may not have seen it). It is also an unquestionable fact that Jerusalem has been a great city and that a prominent temple has been there—a temple first built by Solomon, and rebuilt by Zerubbabel after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. You believe that the Jewish nation resided in Canaan and that their religious practice consisted of the performance of all the ceremonies which are recorded in the Bible. You furthermore believe that this nation descended from Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham; Abraham in turn descended from Noah (in whose time

the flood came upon the entire earth), descending via a series of ancestors. He, via a series of ancestors, descended from Adam—the first man whom God created, from the dust of the earth. You believe that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and by way of the desert, led them to Canaan, and that this Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. You furthermore believe the other books were written by other men, and that the Jewish nation, for nearly two thousand years, accepted all the books of the Old Testament as divine and as the only rule for their faith and doctrine. It is known to nearly all—Jews, Christians, and Muslims unquestionably affirm this to be so—that the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem 1882<sup>10</sup> years ago, was a Prophet mighty in words and deeds, was crucified on the Passover outside Jerusalem, and that the sun was darkened on that given afternoon. These matters are so well-known to everyone, that a person would first have to dehumanize himself and doubt whether he himself truly exists, whether places and people do exist outside of the reach of his vision, and whether any word is true that has ever been written by a man, before he could doubt the things just mentioned. That which troubles you, however, goes beyond all this; it relates to the way of reconciliation and salvation through Christ. In order that you may be delivered from this, stir up your heart to exercise faith as in the truths mentioned, and it will be subservient to prepare your heart to be instructed by the following argument.

Secondly, come a step closer and cast your eyes upon those Scriptures which we know to have been written two to three thousand years ago. Observe the prophecies found therein and compare them with their fulfillment; observe how evident it is that they are of divine origin. Consider these few but well-known prophecies as an example.

It was promised and foretold to Abraham that his seed would wondrously multiply, possess Canaan as their inheritance, and enter into it four hundred years later. Did it not thus come to pass? It was prophesied to the Jews many years in advance that they would be expelled from Canaan and be led away to Babylon; that subsequent to this they would be restored to their country by a king named Cyrus; and that the temple, which would be destroyed to the ground, would be rebuilt by them. And thus it came to pass. It was prophesied that after this restoration, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed and that the entire Jewish nation would

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<sup>10</sup> Considering that this work was published in AD 1700, this figure is obviously incorrect.

be dispersed among all the nations, living without sacrifice, without king, free from idolatry, and in contempt. Is this not true at the present time? It was prophesied nearly two thousand years in advance by Moses, and later by other prophets, that there would be a Messiah, that is, Christ, who would be Prophet, Priest, and King. It was prophesied that He would be the seed—not of a man—but of a woman, would be born from a virgin, from the seed of Abraham, Judah, and David, in Bethlehem, and this would occur 490 years after the restoration from Babylon.

Furthermore, it was prophesied that He would be poor and despised, bear the sins of the children of God, be rejected of the chief priests, be delivered to the Gentiles, be scourged and crucified, have the lot cast for His clothes, arise from the dead, ascend into heaven, and that the Gentiles upon the entire face of the earth would believe in Him. Were not all these things prophesied in the Holy Scriptures many hundreds of years in advance? Have not they all been literally fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has not all this been clearly recorded by the apostles and evangelists,—mentioning times, places, and persons involved—doing so at a time when friends and enemies were as yet living who had witnessed this with their own eyes? Must not even the Jews themselves acknowledge this today? Do not even pagan writings bear witness to this? Does not all of Christianity believe this? Add to this all the typological persons, objects, and services within and external to the temple, and observe how precisely they all match the anti-type, the Lord Jesus; and how that He having come, all these have been nullified. When we consider all these things comprehensively, we must force our eyes shut in order not to see the divinity of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, attentively consider the contents of the Scriptures and compare them for a moment with all human writings. How obscure, crude, mundane, vain, and foolish they are! Is there any divine light which shines forth from them? Whatever is to be found in writings concerning God and religion has been derived from this Book. Whatever has not been derived from it is infantile and ludicrous. However, divine luster emanates from the Scriptures. How gloriously they speak of God and the immortality of the soul; of man's corruption, perversion, and impotence; and of the soul's communion with God, eternal glory, the righteousness of God, and condemnation! Consider the spiritual manner in which spiritual matters are presented—how obscure and hidden they are for man, and would have continued to remain hidden if they had not been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, these truths, having thus been revealed, cannot be understood in a spiritual

sense except the person himself be spiritual. Consider how they are all subservient to draw man away from all that is earthly and transitory and to direct him to God in order to serve and glorify Him in pure holiness, peace, and joy. What human being could fabricate such spiritual matters and present them in such a spiritual fashion? All this should convince a person that the Holy Scriptures are truly and solely of divine origin.

Fourthly, proceed by considering what effects these truths have upon the heart of man. When the apostles turned to the Gentiles, they began nothing less than a war with mankind, doing so without sword and weaponry. What other outcome could be expected but that they would be treated by everyone as fools—yes, would be killed at the very outset? Wherever they came they found uncivilized people who had no knowledge of God, and who as roaring lions would sooner have torn them to pieces than that they would have listened to them. But behold! What irresistible power the gospel had upon their hearts! From wolves, lions, and bears they became lambs. These truths took hold of men by the thousands and led them to manifest the patience of Christ. They began to love Him, trusted in Him, surrendered body and life willingly to Him, and shunned neither fire nor sword. Instead, they persevered in professing divine truths, and thus Asia, Africa, and Europe were filled with the gospel. The more the truth was persecuted, the more it proliferated to the amazement and vexation of the persecutors. And, when the Antichrist solicited the help of all kings and powers in order to extinguish the burgeoning light of the reformation, neither their fire, sword, gallows, nor instruments of torture could avail anything—except to torment them with vexation. For the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church and brought forth fruit a hundredfold—to the regret of the ungodly and to the joy of the godly. Who does not perceive in all this the divinity of the gospel?

Fifthly, consider furthermore the efficacy which the gospel has upon your heart and the heart of others. This is most wondrous in its nature. Not only are they changed in their initial conversion as if a dead person became alive, but their souls are subsequently filled with wondrous light, love, sweetness, joy, peace, and liberty, so that they can do without everything, consider all but as dung, and are able to endure all things. How joyously the martyrs went to the fire and the gallows! How they sang in the midst of the flames! What bliss they considered it to be able to die a cruel death for the name Jesus! Consider the innumerable multitude of believers of all times and places. They all have the same foundational confession, the same Spirit, and the same life. If one by chance

happens to meet someone and hears him speak the language of Canaan, then their hearts will immediately be united in love—more than brothers. Consider also that whatever is expressed to be the truth in the Word of God is also in truth in your heart.

One can perceive and sense that it is one and the same Spirit which speaks in both. You have frequently been amazed that you discovered the same spiritual frames in the Scriptures which you had previously already discovered in your heart without knowing that they had already been recorded in the Scriptures. You then remarked, “This is also recorded in the Word of God!” When you take note of all this, how can you but be convinced and exclaim, “Thy Word is the truth! Those interjections and suggestions which torment me are without foundation.”

### *Encouragement for Believers*

Perhaps you will say: “Upon all these things I must be silent; I cannot prove the opposite to be true, and that which has been said already stimulates me considerably to believe. In the meantime, however, I remain restless due to unbelief asserting itself. I do indeed wish to believe, but I cannot. Oh, what counsel can you give me? How shall I ever come to the point of having a strong and vigorous faith without doubts?” It should be known, however, that:

(1) God leads most of His children by way of this temptation—especially those who have a keen intellect—in order to exercise and strengthen their faith, which subsequently is indeed the case.

(2) God thereby acquaints His own with their unbelieving heart and their impotence to believe, so that on the one hand they may be humbled, and on the other hand power and sovereign grace may be exalted when He grants faith. And thus the lesson derived from this cross is more beneficial to them than comfort and rest.

(3) All believers have always made the Word the foundation of their light, comfort, and walk and have thereby overcome under all circumstances and endured all things. Are you now wiser than all of them? Do you wish to join yourself to the ungodly and mockers, even though you will rarely find one who dares to touch the Scriptures?

(4) You must make a choice between making reason or faith the foundation for your walk, rest, and comfort. If you choose reason, you will be setting the Bible aside. If it is faith, you must set reason aside in order to establish the truth of the Word of God, for faith rests only upon the words of someone else. Reason is but a means.

*Evasive Argument:* I am oppressed; I cannot believe.

*Answer:* Since rejection of the Bible can be harmful to you, and the confirmation of the Bible as being the Word of God cannot

harm you, it is therefore indeed the safest course to trust in the Word of God. You have no desire to live an ungodly life, and you would instead choose a virtuous life. However, all that reason can teach you, you can also learn from the Word of God—yes, even more; that is, in a more heavenly and spiritual manner. And if you are tossed about concerning the veracity of other religions, then the same argument holds true: Whatever virtues you could learn from those religions, you can also learn from the Reformed faith in a much more heavenly and spiritual manner.

Therefore, take hold of yourself and say: “I shall thus conclude the Bible to be the infallible Word of God. I thus accept it as the foundation of my faith and life. I shall strictly observe it, continually read it, and familiarize myself with it. I shall capture all thoughts which arise against it and reject them. I read in this Word that man is lost in himself and cannot save himself; that Jesus Christ is the Surety who, by His suffering and death, reconciles the sinner who receives Him, with God; and that the believer must love, serve, and fear God, and walk according to His will and precepts. This I confirm to be so and shall submit myself to. I shall prayerfully and in all simplicity wait until the Lord will further illuminate and comfort me, even though I am as yet not convinced of the divinity of His Word.” In this way the Lord has restored many, and He will also restore you. The Spirit will then bear witness to you that He is the Spirit of truth.

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## CHAPTER NINETY-FOUR

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### Unbelief Concerning One's Spiritual State

It is not difficult to convince a truly gracious person that he is displeased with his sinful heart, thoughts and deeds; that he grieves in his heart about this; that he longs for God, for reconciliation with Him, to be at peace with Him, and to walk before His countenance in humility and godly fear; that he knows Jesus as Surety and Savior, desires Him, makes Him his choice, turns to Him, receives Him, surrenders to Him, and through Him goes to God in order thus to become a partaker of the benefits of the covenant of grace. A gracious person cannot deny that he finds within his heart an aversion for sin, sin being contrary to the will of God; that he has an inward desire to live holily before the Lord in a manner pleasing to Him; that this is time and again his goal, intent, and objective; and that he has occasionally enjoyed a sweetness and resting in God. Yes, an explicit presentation of these matters will function as a clear mirror in which he can perceive that these matters are to be found in him.

However, to convince and assure the truly gracious in this way that they are in the state of grace, and to cause them to rejoice in this, cannot be accomplished easily, for the special operation of the Holy Spirit is a requisite for this. "Now we have received ... the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor 2:12). The Spirit first bestows grace upon them; however, they then also need to have it shown to them that they have received this grace. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16). There are many gracious souls who, with Samuel, do not know the voice of the Lord. Even if they are possessors of true

grace, they nevertheless do not perceive it within themselves. If they may perceive something, they then find so many arguments to the contrary that they do not dare to come to the conclusion that they truly have grace.

Some are not very much troubled about this. This can either be due to ignorance, or because they are subject to a poor ministry and lack guidance. They therefore do not know that one can be assured of his spiritual state. They occupy themselves with prayer, longing for Jesus and refraining from sin, hoping that they may acquire salvation. Others are despondent and do not know how they may attain assurance; they travel upon their way, oppressed by the power of their corruption. Others are drowsy and lethargic, and are not very much concerned about their state. Again, others are very much concerned about their spiritual state and live in much fear and anxiety.

Regardless of how much or little one may be concerned about his spiritual state, to be without assurance concerning his state prevents him from rejoicing in God, manifesting gratitude, and glorifying God; and it impedes spiritual growth. We shall present the nature and causes of this spiritual disease and endeavor to facilitate its cure.

We wish to premise this by saying that we are not addressing unconverted people who either know that they are indeed without grace, do not think about this, or who very easily pacify themselves and continually assure themselves of their salvation. We also are not addressing those whose conscience is under conviction but who nevertheless live in sin and do not truly go to Christ. In the meantime, such get attention by their ability to complain, and by way of subtle devices, seek to arouse the pity of good ministers who do not have a great measure of the spirit of discernment. Such ministers, due to their tender disposition toward the weak, will greatly trouble themselves to answer their objections and show them that they do indeed have grace. Instead, it would be better if they would deal roughly with them, so that they might become spiritually healthy and repent. Or, if they have been exposed as complaining for the sake of complaining, such ought to return to the world where they belong, so that they would no longer hinder the godly and cause upright ministers additional grief as they preach to and edify others. Let them say whatever they wish when they insist that such a minister neither understands the life of the soul, nor is capable of dealing with souls. When such individuals are exposed, other weak persons will be less hindered in availing themselves of the guidance of such upright ministers. We are thus

not addressing such individuals; instead we are addressing those who have grace and indeed desire to be helped. These are not all in identical circumstances; the one is troubled by this and the other by something else. We shall therefore present several cases and comment upon them.

*The First Cause of Doubt: Doubt About One's Election*

*The first cause* of unbelief concerning one's spiritual state *is a doubting of one's election*. Faith is peculiar to the elect. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy (Rom 9:16). There is a calling according to the purpose of God, and if I am then not elected, I also cannot be saved. Whatever motions of faith and repentance I may pretend to have are not right and it is thus a lost cause. The longer I think about election, the more I believe that I am not one of the elect, but a reprobate instead. I perceive this to be so in my heart, which declares most plainly to me that this is so whenever I desire to pray and flee to Jesus. This grieves me in both body and soul.

*Answer:* First, God rarely communicates with His dear children in an immediate sense, and would He then deem reprobates worthy of granting them such immediate revelations? Be assured that this is not God's voice, but rather your own foolish, unbelieving heart, the devil's devices being intermixed with this. You have not stood in the counsel of God and thus you ought to leave the secret things for the Lord. Be not so brazen as to pretend that you should know that which God has not revealed in His Word. Has God revealed to you the reprobation of someone else? Indeed not! What grounds do you then have to believe that God would reveal your reprobation to you? Therefore, do not live by illusions and your own ideas, but rather conduct yourself wisely.

Secondly, there have been many others who have been subject to the same temptation as you are, and have perhaps been mired in this more deeply than you. Their deliverance taught them that they truly were of the elect and that they had embraced lies by assuring themselves that they were reprobates. Thus they had only been a hindrance to themselves in the way of godliness.

Thirdly, we must not examine our faith, hope, and love in the light of election; rather we must ascend from them to election. You are thus conducting yourself in an entirely wrong and foolish manner. You would tell others not to conduct themselves in this manner, and thereby you can perceive your own foolishness in rejecting your election. God does not grant faith, repentance, life, and love to those whom He has not elected, but to the elect alone.

If the Lord has thus granted these matters to you in principle, you have reason thereby to make your election sure.

Fourthly, God has given us His infallible and sure Word, and we are to govern our faith and life accordingly. Focus upon that, and consider the exhortations, the offers of Christ, and the promises made to those who are pleased with Him; rely upon them. Are you not able to ascend to your election thereby? You will most certainly not discover your reprobation there—yes, even if it were true that you were presently still unconverted. Even if you were the most abominable person alive, you may still not conclude that you are a reprobate and cannot be converted. Therefore, set these foolish and unfounded imaginations aside. Let them no longer trouble you and deal circumspectly according to the Word of God.

*The Second Cause of Doubt: Fear of Not Being Converted*

*The second cause* of doubt is that *I fear that I am not converted*, that thus the entire foundation of my religion is wanting, and therefore all that I perform from here on is not good. I doubt because:

(1) I do not know the time of my conversion.

(2) I did not consciously experience such an evident change from being blind to seeing, from death to life, and from being worldly-minded to being heavenly-minded.

(3) I have not been as sore broken upon viewing my sins, nor have I the sense of God's wrath and fear for damnation as I observe in Acts 2 and 16, and as I have heard recounted by various Christians.

(4) My beginning was prompted by self-love, and fear for damnation motivated me to seek. I was neither motivated by a love for God's honor, a love for Christ, nor the desirability of holiness and salvation. Therefore I am of the opinion that the entire foundation of my religion is wanting, that all that I have and do is only superficial in nature, and that it does not proceed from a heart which is converted and spiritually alive.

*Answer:* First, consider whether you wholeheartedly seek God through Jesus Christ unto justification and sanctification, and for peace, joy, and felicity. The issue here is not whether you know when and how it began. You may not deduce by way of your conversion whether your current religious activity is of the right sort or not. On the contrary, we deduce our conversion by our current religious activity.

Secondly, few know the time of their conversion. Some were already regenerated prior to that moment which they considered to be the moment of their initial conversion. In others their initial

religious exercises were but preparatory exercises, and they were not converted until long after that.

Thirdly, conversion rarely occurs in such a clear manner. Rather, it transpires as gradually as the rising of the sun, so that we are able to perceive only at some later date that we have changed. Yes, some are converted in their childhood so that they cannot recall having been in an unconverted state. Their progression is not a qualitative change, but rather a progression in spiritual light and life. They who have been converted in their adult years, after having lived an ungodly life, are better able to observe an evident difference when comparing the period prior to being under conviction and the period following their conviction.

Fourthly, it is not necessary that conversion be preceded by being greatly troubled, and by fear and trembling. Some are quietly changed by the knowledge of the truth, and without much strife and comfort. Others, due to the preciousness of the gospel, are changed in a joyful manner as Zacchaeus was. Others experience this in a way of falling and rising again, and we may therefore not conclude from one type of conversion that another conversion is not right.

Fifthly, even if you were motivated by self-love, you may from this not doubt your conversion. In this respect, self-love is a virtue and is the initial motivation of many—if not all—converted persons. The same argument applies if terror persuaded you. It is immaterial whether Naaman's leprosy, the blindness of Bartimaeus, the curiosity of Zacchaeus, or the fear of the jailer have been the initial motives whereby you have been led to Christ. Therefore, do not occupy yourself with such thoughts. If you perceive true grace, acknowledge it and let your heart be encouraged thereby.

*The Third Cause of Doubt: Being Able to Believe Without Strife and Effort*

*The third cause of doubt is the following: I am able to believe as frequently as I desire, doing so without strife and without effort. I hold before me the offer of grace along with the promises. I acquiesce in them and very readily surrender myself to the Lord Jesus. However, there is but little warmth and strength in it. I do not have a sensible sorrow for my sins, nor do I have a lively desire for peace, joy, holiness, and other benefits of the covenant. Instead, I am satisfied with the act of acquiescence itself. All this functions as weakly as a lame hand which we must place somewhere in order to grab something. The fingers are indeed in motion to take hold of something, but there is no strength to pull it to myself. On the one*

hand I am not troubled, and on the other hand I derive neither comfort nor joy from this feeble act of receiving. *Sometimes it is an impossible task for me to believe.* I can neither find Jesus nor receive Him by faith. I must be imagining things; I am but beating in the air and am not able to have a transaction with Jesus Himself. At critical moments, such as when I am in danger of death or am encountering another grievous trial, my faith succumbs and I experience great fear and anxiety. I do indeed cry out in prayer, but there is neither trust nor peace in doing so. I cannot come to Jesus; I cannot receive Him by faith; I cannot rely upon Him; and I cannot put my entire trust in Him. Sometimes it would be easier for me to keep the law perfectly than to believe in Christ. When reflecting upon how faith functions, I believe my faith to be but imaginary and the exercise of my intellect.

*Answer:* All this is evidence that you truly believe, and thus it ought not to deject you; rather, it should lift you up, for there is

(1) light, as well as a knowledge of misery, the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace, and of the necessity of Jesus as Surety.

(2) true displeasure about being in a sinful state outside of Christ. There is delight in and a desire for reconciliation with God and all that flows out of it: peace, joy, and godliness.

(3) a true fleeing to Jesus, an acquiescing in His invitation and offer, and a surrendering to Him to be led unto salvation in a way pleasing to Him.

(4) a consciousness of the weakness of faith and a concern as to whether you truly believe—all this being intermixed with a desire for a faith that is true, upright, and vigorous.

(5) a separation from the world, a taking pains not to sin, and an endeavoring to be aligned with Christ, His cause, and His people.

Is not all this true for you? If you can say, in the presence of the Lord “Such is truly the case, but the difficulties mentioned make me think that all these matters within me cannot be the manifestation of true faith,” then know that faith and its manifestation are two distinct matters. Faith can truly be present in someone—and indeed, faith is present where these activities of faith manifest themselves. Nevertheless, it can be that the desired results are absent at a given time and under given circumstances. *The enlightened will* represents the true state of the heart, even though the affections and passions are more inactive and do not stir in a sensible manner. Even though the stirrings of our emotions make us more conscious of our desires—and thus render more comfort to beginners and little ones in grace—the activity of the enlightened will is generally of a purer nature. Therefore, be not despondent if your emotions

do not stir themselves as passionately—as long as you are conscious of the extrinsic activities of the enlightened will.

That it is rather easy for you to acquiesce in the offer of grace and to surrender yourself to Jesus, and that you are able to do it as frequently as you desire, is a manifestation of your gracious disposition. The veracity of this is confirmed by the fact that this transpires as a conscious exercise of the will, and that it is accompanied by some inner stirring to live pleasing unto the Lord in Christ. The fact that it is done in weakness, and is without efficacy to yield comfort and joy, is frequently due to a lack of zeal; for this you are to be reprimanded. Furthermore, it is a proof that in your daily walk you are not that intent upon having intimate fellowship with God. If you are worthy of rebuke in this, it is therefore not an evidence that you do not believe in truth. Be comforted by the one fact and be stirred up by the other.

What you designate as a faltering of your faith when in danger of death and other extraordinary circumstances is not the succumbing of your faith. Rather, the fruits of faith are being hindered from manifesting themselves, such as tranquility, peace, and the assurance of attaining the desired outcome. The fact that faith is active even then is evidenced by your looking unto Jesus, surrendering to Him, and crying out for grace and help through Jesus. However, the fear of death or another extraordinary mishap prevents you from giving heed to the promises. Furthermore, unbelief also manifests itself and will let its power be felt as well. This will cause you to be full of fear and anxiety concerning either the outcome of the matter, or the salvation of your soul.

The fact that believing (which at times was such an easy task for you) is sometimes so difficult and impossible is because of a difference as to what you have in view. When believing is an easy work, you will be without strife and your focus will be on the extrinsic acts of faith; or else you do not have intimate fellowship with God and are dealing with all this in a superficial manner. Believing will be difficult and impossible, however, when you penetrate deeper into things and begin to engage your reason more, for the Word of God alone must be the foundation of your faith. Or else, you are then occupied with the fruits of faith—that is, to have them in such a measure as you imagine they ought to be—and to have an assurance that is free from anything that could engender doubt, as well as to have a confidence characterized by peace alone, without the least manifestation of fear. No wonder that this is an impossible task for you, for this is the Lord's work, who gives to everyone as much as pleases Him. From all this you

can observe that your faith is indeed feeble and deficient, but that it is nevertheless true within. This is the very purpose for having shown you all this, so that thereby you may be lifted out of your weakened condition and thus proceed in the way of uprightness with joy.

#### The Fourth Cause of Doubt: The Opinion that Assurance Always Accompanies Faith

*The fourth cause of doubt is the opinion that assurance is considered to be of the essence of faith, or at least that faith is always accompanied by assurance.* We then reason as follows: If my faith were true saving faith, I would be assured of my saving interest in Jesus and of salvation itself. There are times, however, when I cannot even find the infallible marks of grace—faith and repentance—from which I would dare to conclude that I have true grace. And if I do occasionally observe such marks in me, I nevertheless cannot come to this conclusion. I fear that I do not rightly understand the spiritual meaning of these marks as they are presented in the Word of God, and that which I discern in myself is not spiritual in the sense that Scripture delineates this to be. The Lord has never sealed it to my heart nor said to my soul, “I am thy salvation.” I am always sorrowful and oppressed and do not know what it means to have joy and gladness in God. I therefore fear that in the end I will have deceived myself.

*Answer:* Be assured that without the express assurance of our saving interest in Christ we can indeed be saved. Thousands who have never had this express assurance are already in heaven, and there will be thousands of such who will yet come there as well. To be assured is a sweet and desirable matter, and it cannot be but that a believer will long for this. If, however, it pleases the Lord to withhold this, a person is to be submissive and occupy himself with the exercise of the extrinsic acts of faith.

Secondly, assurance is not of the essence of faith. To insist on the contrary is a serious misunderstanding which is both outside of and contrary to the Word of God. The Word of God calls faith a coming to Jesus, a receiving of Him, a longing for Him, an entrusting of ourselves to Him, and a leaning and a relying upon Him. However, it never denotes faith as a being assured of having a saving interest in Him, and of attaining eternal felicity—even though felicity is promised in consequence of faith and flows out of it.

Thirdly, the assurance of having a saving interest in Jesus can be entirely absent from faith. Consider, for instance, the cases we have discussed in a previous paragraph, such as when someone is fearful of death, is in danger of drowning, or has fallen into the

hands of murderers, etc. If such a person with all his heart flees to Jesus, calls upon Him, urgently takes hold of Him, surrenders to Him, and casts himself into His hands, then there is faith. However, both the moment and the troubles at hand prevent all reflection upon self and one's deeds, and thus all assurance is gone. If one were to die under such circumstances, he would enter heaven without assurance—yes, with great fear and anxiety.

Fourthly, there is a distinction between the assurance which generally follows upon the steadfast exercise of faith, and the *consciousness* of being assured. If, with steadfastness, you exercise faith in Jesus with supplications, with application of the promises, with a good conscience, etc., and you then reflect upon the disposition of your soul, you shall perceive that at such a time a lively hope, tranquility, peace, contentment, or trust was present. However, during the time of strife which followed this exercise of faith you did not expressly give heed to this, nor did you take note of these matters by thinking, "Behold, this and this is indeed what I experienced." Even though you may not have paid attention to this at that time, the manifestations of assurance were nevertheless there.

Fifthly, there is also a misconception about assurance. One designates assurance, and understands thereby the sensible enjoyment of heavenly benefits, or at least such a measure of assurance in which there neither is nor can be the least impediment. Such ought to know, however, that both the believer and his faith are imperfect, and will remain imperfect in this life. Thus, the unbelieving heart is always capable of bringing forth some doubts which would cast a cloud upon the assurance of the best among them. They therefore reject such doubts without giving any heed to these doubts. Assurance flows out of a syllogism. The major premise is then derived from the Word of God which describes the nature of saving faith, regeneration, faith and its activity—declaring the promises to be for such. The assured person has light in this matter and is acquainted with the truth. Irrational arguments such as: "Maybe I misunderstand the Word of God and it possibly intends these things in a more spiritual sense than I do," are rejected out of hand, knowing that the Word expresses itself succinctly and clearly, and that we are not to understand it in a natural, but in a spiritual sense. The minor premise is derived from our own heart and its inner motions as viewed by an omniscient God. We shall then declare that such and such is our condition, our consciences bearing witness to it. We indeed perceive and acknowledge the imperfections of the disposition of our heart and of its actions; nevertheless, we likewise perceive the genuineness of the graces

which the Holy Spirit has planted there. From this we then draw the conclusion: “I am therefore in the state of grace, am born again, and have faith.” This is assurance. Sometimes these first two arguments can be clearly discerned, but the conclusion is nevertheless shrouded in darkness and yields but little strength and comfort. Sometimes the conclusion is also clear and yields comfort due to being assured of being a partaker of grace. Sometimes the Holy Spirit works more powerfully than is normally the case and gives an impression of these three arguments which is as clear as the one made by a seal in soft wax or lacquer. This is the sealing of the Spirit. Sometimes, in addition to this, the Holy Spirit will grant extraordinary illumination, and will not only grant assurance of being partakers of these matters, but also the sensible enjoyment of the sweetness and felicity of them. Believers would be delighted to have the latter and would be desirous that this were always so. We shall not oppose them in this desire; however, we do oppose them in their insistence that only the latter—or at least the degree before this—is assurance, thus deeming themselves to be without assurance if they miss this. Here is the snare which deprives them from being encouraged and joyful. Such ought to know, however, that God does not work these last two matters in everyone, nor does He do so at all times.

The fact that a believer can derive neither comfort nor encouragement from the syllogism is not due to a lack of assurance, for the ability to develop this syllogism is assurance itself. Rather, it is due to a lack of historical faith whereby we fail to have a lively and clear perception of the Word as being the infallible truth—even though we do not perceive this to be the difficulty. It can be due to an extraordinary darkness which has come upon the soul, rendering one unable to see the glorious matters and our blessedness. It can also be due to a deadness which has overtaken the soul in consequence of being too intent upon the immediate sealing of the Holy Spirit and the sensible enjoyment of grace itself, deeming this alone to be assurance and thereby despising the day of small things. You may indeed long for such immediate sealing and such revelations of God to your soul, as well as for the spiritual joy and gladness issuing forth from this. Know, however, that God in His sovereign good pleasure neither grants this to all, nor does so at all times. Be satisfied with the normal way in which God leads His children.

Can you say, upon careful reflection, that you have never been assured? Have you never enjoyed tranquility and peace in your conscience upon the wrestling of faith? Have you never felt that God forgave you your sins? Have you never experienced that God

was your God? I believe that you will not dare to deny this; or else you have been negligent in observing these matters. If you say: “I have had this in some measure, but I believe this to have been imaginary; else I would have retained this,” then I counsel you to stir up yourself by reflecting upon the days of old and keep yourself assured that God neither has changed, nor is able to change, in His grace toward you—even though it is His normal way not to always allow His children to feel this.

*The Fifth Cause of Doubt: Being Overwhelmed by the Magnitude of Being a Recipient of Divine Grace*

*The fifth doubt* is engendered by the consideration of the *magnitude of the matter*. Some find true evidences of grace within themselves by which they could be assured that they are children of God. On the one hand, however, they receive a deep insight into the totality of their sinnership, and on the other hand they receive a deep insight into the magnitude of this matter. They consider what it means to be eternally loved by God; for Christ to have died for them out of love; and to have the Holy Spirit dwell in them as in a temple. They reflect upon what it means to be a child of God; to have God—the majestic, holy, and glorious Creator and Lord of heaven and earth—as their God; and to be heirs of eternal and incomprehensible felicity. When they then consider that God leaves nearly all men in their misery, condemns them due to their sin, makes but few the objects of His grace, and that they are among those few, they will deem this to be too great and unbelievable. They consider it to be too presumptuous for them to number themselves as one of them. This prevents them from coming to a conclusion about themselves and remaining assured of being in the state of grace—a conclusion which they otherwise would make on the basis of the grace which they perceive within themselves.

*Answer:* It is a pity that you draw such a wrong conclusion from the perfections of God. How can we refrain ourselves from rebuking such? Since, however, it issues forth from feeble humility, we shall instruct you, hoping that you who are capable of being assured may, with joy and love, serve God as your God and, with a joyous hope upon eternal felicity, finish your course with joy and to the glory of God.

Therefore, you are first of all to know and be assured that even though it is too great for you to receive, it is not too great for the infinite One to give to you. You deem it to be presumptuous to assure yourself of being in a state of grace, even though you could come to this conclusion from clear evidences. Instead, it is an act

of pride not to assure yourself; as if you would not want to receive more than you are worthy of, and would not want to place yourself under any obligation upon the receipt of benefits. In reasoning thus, you are grieving the very Benefactor who wishes to delight Himself in granting benefits to you. Therefore, receive it with joy and thanksgiving, and acknowledge the great goodness of God in bestowing incomprehensible benefits upon you, a wretched one.

Secondly, you must know that no one receives anything because they are worthy, or due to some good disposition, frame, and qualification which would move God to bless them. Others are as unworthy as you are. Nevertheless, they are willing to receive infinite benefits from God and to place themselves under eternal obligation. They are amazed about this, acknowledge the Lord's goodness, and thank and glorify Him for it. They are glad that with Jacob they may say, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant" Gen 32:10, and with David, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Sam 7:18). You ought to do likewise.

Thirdly, prior to calling you, God knew indeed who you were and what you would do; and yet He sent the gospel and His messengers to you. He called you, drew you, led you to the Mediator, granted you faith, converted you, granted you spiritual light and life, and has frequently comforted you and shown you that He loves you. If therefore, at the outset of your spiritual life, you did not deem it too great a matter to be saved, and you dared to flee to Him with many tears for His grace, would you then now (He having granted His grace to you) refuse this grace because it is too great a matter for you? Or are you of the opinion that God would change after all the benefits bestowed upon you, since He already knew you so well prior to this, as well as how you would behave yourself toward Him? Therefore, honor the Lord, and joyfully acknowledge the grace bestowed upon you.

Fourthly, God's objective in bestowing grace and granting such great and infinite felicity—doing so to but few and in contrast to many others, and to the greatest and most unworthy of sinners—His objective, I repeat, is the glorification of Himself, so that in the revelation of His free grace, His infinite and incomprehensible love, and the riches of His mercy all the angels and all the elect would be amazed and rejoice, and that in beholding and magnifying this, their felicity would thus be increased. Observe this in the following passages: "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6);

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (1 Tim 1:16). In order for the Lord to achieve this objective, there indeed had to be a great distinction between the sinner and the gifts of His grace. If you therefore perceive this great disparity within yourself, you must not be hindered by this in the acknowledgement of God’s grace. Rather, this ought to motivate you to acknowledge this and to be assured by the evidences of true grace, so that you would thus glorify God, and angels and men would glorify God concerning His grace in you.

*The Sixth Cause of Doubt: Not Being Able to Pray; and Prayer Not Being Answered*

*The sixth doubt* is engendered by *being unable to pray and by not being heard*. The argument is as follows: Believers have the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of prayer, causing them to cry out, *Abba, Father*. He prays for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. However, I cannot pray. When I engage myself to pray, my heart closes up and I can hardly bring forth a word—yes, my thoughts even begin to wander. And when I say something, it is but the work of my lips. My heart is not moved, my prayer does not penetrate, and it is as if I am speaking in the air. I cannot bring myself into the presence of God to address Him in an intimate manner. Much less am I able to do so with the appropriate humility, reverence, and faith that I shall be heard. And even if I am moved by a given matter, pray earnestly and repeatedly, I am nevertheless not heard and do not receive what I desire. However, God hears His elect and answers their prayers. This makes me despondent and causes me to think that I am not in the state of grace.

*Answer:* First, at one time or another, all God’s children are in this condition. Ask every believer who for some time has been a Christian and they will affirm it. Therefore, neither consider it to be strange nor conclude from this that you are without grace. If others encounter this, why would you not experience this? Job, David, and other saints have complained about this.

Secondly, it is indeed a grievous condition and a cause of backsliding in spiritual life. However, the grief over a negative frame, the desire to be permitted and to be able to pray, and the desire to be heard, show that there is yet life in the soul.

Thirdly, in retrospect you will have to acknowledge that it has not always been this way. Previously you were able to pray with strong crying and tears, and to persevere in doing so. Furthermore,

God has occasionally demonstrated that He was pleased with your supplications and tears, and at times has also granted what you prayed for. However, the fact that you are presently not able to pray in this manner is perhaps due to:

- (1) a desire to enjoy a high level of spirituality and intimacy at the very outset of prayer;
- (2) beginning in your own strength—not coming as a destitute sinner, praying for the ability to pray and for the Spirit of prayer so that you may be enabled to pray;
- (3) being desirous to do or receive something extraordinary at your scheduled devotional time, even though in the meantime you can be very much engaged in ejaculatory prayer in the performance of your calling;
- (4) spiritual darkness having come upon your soul, so that you cannot perceive the preciousness of the matters toward which your desires would otherwise be kindled;
- (5) your affections being divided and there being too much cleaving to the things of this world;
- (6) being lazy and unwilling to exert yourself to seek the Lord and to exercise yourself in prayer.

Therefore, seek for the causes, and as much as is in you, remove them. Be diligent in acquainting yourself with the Lord with a perfect heart, so that you will not be further estranged from Him and become more entangled in the creature.

Fourthly, do you dare to say that the Lord has never heard you? Your heart would rebuke you. The fact that you do not receive that which you have prayed for is due to:

- (1) being listless in prayer;
- (2) praying for matters which the Lord has not promised to give;
- (3) asking for matters which the Lord has promised to give under the condition that it be of benefit to your godliness and salvation—not what is best in your judgment, but what is according to God's wise government relative to your life;
- (4) it being the Lord's intent to humble you and to show you that you are but a worm. Thus, you have nothing to say if God would not be pleased to give it to you—and you must deem it a manifestation of inexpressible goodness to be permitted to pray.
- (5) the Lord being desirous to perceive what your desires are, to see your tears, and to hear your voice;
- (6) the Lord intending to prepare you so that you become the more fit to receive the desired matters, and make better use of them;
- (7) the matters you desire being such that God does not grant them to you all at once, but gradually;

(8) the possibility of the Lord having answered your prayers and having granted you your desire, and you not having perceived it.

Indeed, the fact that you can neither pray (about which the soul is grieved) nor receive your desire upon your prayer ought not to cause you to be unbelieving, despondent, or fretful; for it is not a sign of being without grace. Rather, it is evidence of God's wise and good dealings with you, thereby seeking your advantage. If you are insignificant in yourself, then remain as insignificant as a worm. Pray frequently according to the measure which the Lord is pleased to give you, and exert yourself even if you were to do this work but in a natural manner. It will, however, take on a spiritual dimension while you are thus engaged. Persevere in this way and the Lord will again visit you, teach you how to pray, answer your prayers, grant you the desire of your soul, or cause your desire to be satisfied by being content with His will.

*The Seventh Cause of Doubt: My Religion Proceeds from an Enlightened Mind*

*The seventh cause of doubt is the following: I fear that all my religion only proceeds from an enlightened mind. I have been born and raised in the church; I know the doctrines and therefore only subscribe to them out of custom. Nothing deeply affects my heart, moves me, nor proceeds to bring forth a sensible sorrow, a lively sincerity, and comfort. My heart is not in anything, and nothing proceeds from my heart.*

*Answer:* Such doubt is purely the result of ignorance concerning the functioning of the mind, the will or the heart, the affections, and man in general. Therefore, some instruction in this respect will suffice.

(1) We understand, comprehend, and know a matter by way of the mind, and judge as to whether it is true and whether it is good. This determination is not made in a vacuum, but rather as it relates to us; that is, whether we should pursue or avoid the matter, do or refrain from doing it.

(2) The heart or the will relates to the pleasure or displeasure toward, aversion or love for, and the desire or lack of desire for a given matter.

(3) The affections are the passions, the vehement emotions which manifest themselves in either fleeing from or pursuing a matter.

(4) When man engages himself, then it is the mind which is first activated, and man performs whatever he performs with his mind. The mind, in turn, renders the will active, and the will activates the affections.

Secondly, apply this now to yourself and observe the manner in which you function. The mind in and of itself only observes and judges something to be good or evil. It knows of no displeasure, sorrow, or longing; leaves the matter as it is; and is satisfied with having knowledge of the matter. If such is the case with you, you have reason to think that things are not right with you. If, however, the mind is joined by the will; that is, if you grieve over that which you miss and have a longing to enjoy or do a matter, then your heart is engaged. The heart is the *will enlightened*, and as such is displeased with sin, and finds pleasure in Christ and the way of salvation. It is thus that one takes the initiative to flee, seek, and be active. If you conduct yourself thus, you need not be concerned that you have nothing more than an enlightened mind.

Thirdly, your concern stems from the fact that your affections and sensible passions are mistaken for the heart. If these are absent, then you are of the opinion that the heart is not involved. However, this is a serious misunderstanding. One's passions are frequently the result of his physical constitution. One person is much more vehement in his affections than another. Our passions are generally malevolent guides. He who engages himself very passionately is not necessarily engaged in a more sincere manner than he who is active by way of his enlightened will. A vehemence of passion generally manifests itself at the outset of conversion due to having much fear. Subsequently, however, the passions are in general not so vehement, there being a secret belief of having a saving interest in Christ. It can also be that the soul, so to speak, functions autonomously and with great exertion of mind reflects upon the mysteries of faith, embraces them with the will, and in such a frame finds its delight. However, sometimes the absence of affections is indicative of a lack of earnestness which is engendered by a familiarity with the matters at hand, by darkness, by despondency, or by laziness. From that perspective, this absence of affections is an undesirable matter, and one must strive to lift himself out of this. The absence of affections may, however, not be the cause of disowning your spiritual state, for your passions are not your heart; the heart is the enlightened will. If there is the inclination of the heart and you are conscious of the fact that it is Christ you seek after unto justification and sanctification; if in that frame you are fleeing unto Him, receiving Him, surrendering yourself to Him, and, motivated by the fear of God, you pray, flee, oppose evil, and pursue that which is good out of love to be pleasing unto the Lord—then you may unreservedly be assured that you have grace, and should rejoice in this.

*The Eighth Cause of Doubt: A Being Fearful of Hypocrisy*

*The eighth doubt pertains to suspecting ourselves of hypocrisy.* We then reason as follows: “It cannot be that I have grace, for in nearly all my actions my conscience accuses me that I am being hypocritical. It appears as if I am serving God, but in reality I have myself in view. Whenever I sing, pray, lead in prayer in the presence of others, or do anything else while being observed by men, my heart immediately begins to reflect upon the people; that is, to gain their esteem, love, and praise. That is the wind which blows in the sails of my soul, activates me, and causes me to be zealous. Having performed something, I seek to know what people think of it. I like to hear that I am praised, and it makes me happy. This seeking after the favor of men is such a habitual tendency in me. Yes, even when I am alone and do something godly, my heart is reflecting upon how the people will react. Am I thus not an outright hypocrite? Furthermore, a double-hearted man is unstable in all his ways, whereas a steadfast disposition is reserved for the righteous. However, I am very unstable. At one moment I am zealous, and then lukewarm; at one moment I make progress, and then I stand still—yes, I even regress; at one moment I have courage, and then I am despondent; at one moment I am elated, and then I am depressed; at one moment I have a tender conscience, my words and deeds being governed by the fear of God, and then again my sinful passions are on the run with me. Such is truly my condition, and therefore I cannot but think that I am a hypocrite, and a hypocrite is the object of God’s wrath and will have a most dreadful hell as his portion.”

*Answer:* First, all the foregoing matters are sins which are evil and worthy of rebuke. Without reservation you ought to humble yourself about this before God.

Secondly, it can be that you are too hard on yourself due to your hatred for hypocrisy, and due to your fear of being without grace. However, let us assume that all is as you have said it to be, and we shall consider you to be such. We would like you to answer the following questions.

(1) Are these ulterior motives your joy and delight, or are they a burden to you and a matter of grief and displeasure?

(2) Are these your true objective? Do they motivate you in your actions, and upon having achieved your goal, do you delight yourself in their having been your objective? Or do these ulterior motives slip in through the back door—contrary to your wishes and intentions—and do you pray to be delivered from them? Do

they rob you of all the peace and joy you had upon having done a good work?

(3) Do you function better when you are alone and your transactions are between God and your soul; or are you better off spiritually when you are in the presence of people? In answering these questions sincerely in the presence of the Lord—that is, without flattering yourself, or being detrimental to the condition of your heart—you will be able to perceive what the motivating principle of your heart is: uprightness or hypocrisy. If it is your intent to seek yourself and you reflect upon how you may accomplish this, and if it is your joy and delight to do all this preferably in the presence of men rather than alone, you ought to admit to being a hypocrite (which you are), and repent. If, however, the seeking of self is a burden to you, grieves you, and you pray against it; if such ulterior motives slip in through the back door; if they trouble your soul and spoil what you have done; if you are much more intimate, spiritual, and upright when you are alone than when you are among people—then you, upright ones (which you are), take courage from this, and do not disown your spiritual state.

However, you should know, first of all, that believers are only sanctified in part and that the seed of various sins still remains in them. No sin can ever be mortified so completely that it can never surface again. This remaining corruption will manifest itself outwardly, this being contingent upon the condition of the body, opportunities, and other circumstances. Therefore, the one godly person will fall more into a given sin than the other. For you the seeking of self is the chief sin. However, it is evident from that which has been said that it does not have dominion over you, but is resisted. You can thus observe that this sin is your enemy—and if hypocrisy is your enemy, uprightness has become your natural disposition by the grace of God.

Secondly, it should be known that the fear of seeking self frequently causes us to think about the seeking of self. This will suggest to us that it is so, and the devil creates the illusion in our minds that we are seeking self. Some, not being aware of this, unjustly accuse themselves of this, whereas in truth it was nothing more than an illusion, an accusation, an enticement, or a fear that this is so. You must thus conclude that you are not a hypocrite, even though you are occasionally besieged by ulterior motives and occasionally fall victim to this contrary to your will.

Thirdly, instability is not a sign of hypocrisy when, upon faltering in this area, our heart principally is and remains knit to the Lord; when our failures are, so to speak, but momentary enchantments

about which we are sorrowful; and when we are completely out of sorts upon deviating here and there from being steadfast of heart before God and in His way. Instead, this instability is indicative of the warfare between the spirit and the flesh—a battle in which at one time the Spirit, and then again the flesh, has the upper hand. This proves that we are steadfast in principle, since the spirit, time and again, prevails and is grieved over the aberrations of the flesh. Therefore do not succumb so readily, but rather stand fast in the faith, conduct yourself manfully, and you will increase in strength.

*The Ninth Cause of Doubt: The Power of Corruption and Sin*

*The ninth cause of doubt is the great corruption within and the power of sin.* A person plagued by this doubt thinks: “Justification and sanctification always go hand in hand. When holiness is absent, regeneration, faith, and justification will also be absent. An unsanctified person is not in the state of grace. Not only do I find holiness to be absent within myself, but instead I perceive nothing but sin. I have such an evil, abominable, and defiled heart, which makes me believe that there is no one who has such an evil heart as I. From this heart issues forth all manner of vain and filthy thoughts about sin. I sin continually, and the sins within me are of such an abominable nature that I don’t even dare to mention them. I do not occasionally fall into these sins, but rather they have the upper hand and have dominion over me. When the inclination but arises, I immediately stand ready and commit these sins—yes, I even stir up this inclination myself and reinforce it. What is even worse, it all occurs against a speaking conscience, indeed, against the realization of the presence of God, and against the express warnings of the Spirit in my heart. Thus, I can only conclude that I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven to all eternity. Therefore, all the hope which I entertained at one time is gone and I now number myself among the damned.”

*Answer:* First, be ashamed before God, the holy angels, and before men. Shame on you, oh sinful man! Truly, if all this is to be found in you, and there is nothing else besides this, you have every reason to believe that you are yet unconverted and without grace. Therefore, depart and repent with haste, for I have no comfort for you.

Secondly, it does occur that someone who truly has spiritual life is for a season overwhelmed and overcome by the power of sin—as has just been depicted. However, even during such a season, spiritual life yet manifests itself. Yet, it is not detected when one is overwhelmed by corruption; and thus one falters in regard to faith

and his spiritual state. We shall therefore demonstrate to such persons wherein spiritual life yet manifests itself, and thereby encourage those who are despondent, lift them out of this sinful condition, and restore them to a godly walk. The power of corruption as being a spiritual disease, and the regression of spiritual life, will be discussed in the following chapter. We shall therefore be brief on this subject and only show, to the encouragement of those who are despondent about their spiritual condition, what measure of grace still manifests itself in this battle, even though it suffers defeat at that moment.

Thirdly, give therefore your careful attention, do not argue; acknowledge that which is truthfully to be found in you.

(1) Do you have an inward aversion for the inner dimension of spiritual life, as well as for those who are truly godly; and are you with your whole heart attached to sin and to ungodly and unconverted decent persons, this being your only joy and delight? Or is the opposite to be found in you? Is there heartfelt aversion for sin as sin, as being contrary to the will of God, as well as for sinners and worldly people? Do you find delight and a love for a wholehearted uniting with the will of God and with the godly?

(2) Is there a deliberate intention to commit sin—also when the passion for sin is not raging within—without there being any opposition of the heart? Or are you inclined not to commit sin when the vehemence of passion is absent, and do so with a view upon God and Christ?

(3) When you are in such a sinful condition, are you then joyful and cheerful, or are you grieved, restless, and of an anxious spirit?

(4) Are you insensitive when sin is committed, or does it wound your soul and cause you grief?

(5) Are you content to remain in this condition, or is it your wholehearted desire to be delivered from this, and to serve the Lord with freedom and joy?

(6) Are you always in such a sinful condition, or are there times that you are able to deeply humble yourself with tears before the Lord, supplicate for grace, and flee to the Lord Jesus to obtain forgiveness by His blood—by which you are united to God in Christ, though not yet in an assured sense? Do you at such a time make spirited resolutions to be on guard against those and all other sins, heartily crying out unto the Lord for strength, being presently convinced of your own impotence? Are there seasons which are characterized by a cleaving unto Christ, the fear of God, and having strength against sin? Calmly answer these questions. If you are convinced that the good which is presented in these questions

is to be found in you, it is evident that there is still life in your soul and that sin does not have the dominion. Rather, spiritual life—however feeble it may be—desires the contrary, groans, supplicates and engages in holy warfare. As long as we are still struggling, sin has not yet gained a complete victory. The following proverb applies here: *He who is down is still fighting.*

This also proves that you have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, for:

(1) man as such is not the object of this sin, but it is professed truth, and those people who confess and experience this confessed truth. There is in this sin an unyielding hatred for the entire cause of Christ.

(2) this sin is not opposed by an internal principle of spiritual life.

(3) such persons will never have remorse, nor ever desire forgiveness.

It is true that sin is greatly aggravated if it is committed against an illuminated and lively conscience, and against the sensible warnings of the Holy Spirit; one ought to humble and abhor himself greatly concerning this. However, that is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the corruption of the residual old Adam who is to be distinguished from the new man. The old Adam is designated as the enemy, and the new man must be considered as the person one is. Paul did this: “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom 7:20).

If there is yet spiritual life in you, keep courage, lift up your head from out of your infirmities, and begin your battle by renewal in the power of God who, having begun a good work in you, will also finish it in the day of Christ. He does not forsake the work of His own hands, but “giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29). Just as the Lord beholds the good which He has worked in you, you must do likewise. Acknowledge it to be of the Lord, and encourage yourself thereby.

#### *The Tenth Cause of Doubt: Unbelief Concerning Fundamental Doctrines*

*The tenth doubt* has its origin in *unbelief concerning fundamental doctrines*. Someone may say, “Wretch that I am, there is neither hope nor counsel for me, for I do not even believe that there is a God or that the Scriptures are divine truth. I doubt the existence of heaven and hell, the immortality of the soul, and whatever else is deemed to be invisible. Yes, I have blasphemous thoughts about God. All of this certainly cannot coexist with regeneration.”

*Answer:* Please refer to chapters 14 (Vol. #1, p. 381), 92 (p. ###193), and 93 (p. ###199) of this work. This

is indeed a very grievous condition; however, it is not a sign of being unconverted. This befalls most of the godly, especially those who have a keen mind. You are therefore not to be without hope about your condition. You can very readily perceive that these doubts are but interjections, for:

First, you have not always been in this condition, and there are still intermissions in this condition, during which the love for communion with God manifests itself. He is your desire and in Him is all your delight. When He hides Himself, you are sorrowful; when you receive hope, you rejoice, and when He reveals Himself, you are delighted. To fear the Lord, do His will, and walk before His countenance in humility is the life of your soul; Christ is precious to you. Was it not thus in the past, and is it not thus intermittently? Therefore, reflect upon your previous experience.

Secondly, even when thus assaulted, evidences of spiritual life nevertheless manifest themselves. Why are you not at peace? How can you have a problem if the invisible is nonexistent and if there is no such thing as immortality? Therefore, eat, drink, yield to your lusts, for if there is no immortality, there is no sin and you do not have to anticipate judgment. When you hear such arguments, does not your love then surface? Wouldn't you then begin to weep? Does this not demonstrate that you believe all this to be true and that these are but assaults of your corrupt heart and the devil? Consider especially how your heart is troubled about blasphemous thoughts. Why is this? Is it out of fear for punishment? You will perceive that this is not the primary cause, but rather that your being disturbed proceeds from the love of God, and this love cannot tolerate that we would think or speak anything that is unbecoming of God. Therefore, endure the storm patiently, for the Lord will rebuke Satan; these blasphemous thoughts are not your sins, but Satan's. You merely hear them and this troubles you. The Lord will, by renewal, reveal Himself to your soul and declare that He exists, and is as He declares Himself to be in His Word. The Spirit will surely witness to you that the Spirit which speaks in the Word is the Spirit of truth.

*The Eleventh Cause of Doubt: Spiritual Darkness and Deadness*

*The eleventh doubt arises from spiritual darkness and deadness.* Such a person will say: "Oh, my condition is even more wretched than all the previous ones, for I deem those happy who have feeling and who endure strife. I, on the contrary, am dead. I indeed believe everything, but it is entirely without feeling. I am not sensible of either the favor or wrath of God, nor am I sensible of heaven, hell, godliness, or sin. Everything seems to me as if it had been but a

dream. It is so far out of my reach that I can no longer see it; I am in Egyptian darkness. My devotional exercises have ceased; neither the Word of God nor the sermons affect me; rebukes do not trouble me; comforts render me no joy; nor do exhortations stir me. In one word, I am more dead and insensible than the most ungodly person, and thus I have neither spiritual life nor grace. My case is more hopeless than that of the most ungodly sinner.”

*Answer:* Your complaint is reasonable and your condition to be pitied; however, it is not beyond hope. We shall deal with this condition in depth in chapters 98 and 99. Here it presents itself to us as a reason for doubt as to whether we are in a state of grace. My response is as follows:

First, a great number of eminent saints have been in the same condition as you currently are, and you will not be the last one. Let this support you in your hope that you will be delivered from this.

Secondly, your state is not as dead as you imagine it to be. You deem the sensitivity of your affections to be the same as spiritual life itself; this is a serious misunderstanding. *The enlightened will* in its functioning toward God, and the way of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ, is the primary motion of spiritual life whereby the soul seeks union with God. If you now impartially judge yourselves, you will yet find this to be present.

Thirdly, a spiritually dead person is attracted to spiritually dead persons. Birds of a feather flock together and hate whatever is not like them. The ungodly seek the company of the ungodly; cultured people seek out cultured people; those who are externally religious seek fellowship with those who are like-minded, and collectively their hearts are opposed to those who are godly within. If you were dead indeed, you would love and hate as they do. However, the contrary is true for you, for the reprobate are despised in your eyes and you honor those that fear the Lord, and your heart is knit to them in love. Is this therefore not an evidence that you have been translated from death to life?

Fourthly, if you were as dead as you imagine yourself to be, from whence then does this displeasure with your condition, your sorrowful brooding, and your languishing proceed? A dead person does not have any feelings. However, the fact that you are sensible of your insensitivity shows that there is life, though it be feeble.

Fifthly, when spiritual life is held before you in its preciousness, consisting in sweet union with Jesus, a leaning in love upon Him, peace of conscience in light of the forgiveness of sins, and a humble and tender walk before the Lord—aren't you then acquainted with it? Does not your previous experience come to

mind? If it could be given to you with one word, wouldn't you then wholeheartedly and eagerly choose for this, there being love for such a disposition? These are indeed clear evidences that in all your deadness there is yet life, and that therefore you ought not to disown your state due to your deadness.

*The Twelfth Cause of Doubt: Daily Crosses*

*The twelfth doubt is engendered by a bodily cross.* Whoever is not tried in this respect does not know all that can transpire when everything is against him. It can be that we must see parents or children in all manner of misery or be rendered all manner of grief and sorrow by them; that we are ridiculed and despised by everyone; that we come into poverty so that we do not know how to maintain an honorable existence, pay our debts—yes, where we shall obtain bread in order to keep ourselves and our families alive. It can also be that we are afflicted with lengthy periods of pain and discomfort, and are thus overwhelmed by crosses from all sides. If the Lord then hides Himself and we thus find neither comfort nor help, this would even cause a strong Christian to shake and tremble. Furthermore, if all this is conjoined by the subtle assaults of Satan, and in addition to this, our unbelieving, unmortified, and fretful heart manifests itself, our faith will readily falter as far as assurance is concerned. We are then ready to think that all these things come upon us in God's wrath, and that we are not children of God, for we shall then think that if we were children of God, God would not desert us but would help us. Yes, we are then ready to doubt God's providence, and many other thoughts and assaults will proceed from this.

*Answer:* First, this also is no reason to disown our state. Were not Job, Joseph, David, Jeremiah and all they of whom the Scriptures speak, true believers and in the state of grace? Does not the Lord Jesus give us an example of a gracious person in poor Lazarus? Nevertheless, his cross was both heavy and lengthy. How frequently Job and David sinned in such circumstances! Would you condemn all whom you have known and whose histories you have heard recounted, who have been in much more wretched circumstances according to the body than you; who have had to deal with and manifested impatience and unbelief concerning the cross—would you condemn all of them as not having grace? Indeed not—and thus you have no reason to disown your spiritual state.

Secondly, add to this the numerous declarations of God that it is His way to lead His people to heaven by way of manifold crosses: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Ps 34:19); "We must

through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22); “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:8). From this you may perceive that chastisements and crosses are not a token of His wrath toward His own, but a token of His love. You may perhaps retort, “Toward His own—but I do not believe that I am one of His own.” To this I respond that it is then an established fact that by the magnitude and the duration of the cross you cannot determine that you are without grace. Nevertheless you do so—and improperly so.

Thirdly, the grace which is to be found in your heart will yet manifest itself in the midst of your cross-bearing, and this you are to note to your encouragement.

(1) What grieves you more: the cross, or the fact that you do not bear the cross well; that the cross is heavy and of such long duration, or that you are so impatient and fretful, fail to patiently humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, have doubts concerning the providence of God, and think, “Does God indeed take notice of man, consider his misery, and hear his prayers”?

(2) What do you desire more: reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of sins, or deliverance from the cross? What is more prominent in your seeking: to be content and to be submissive to the will of God, or merely to be relieved of the cross?

(3) What do you choose: that the cross be removed or that you be sanctified thereby—yes, that the cross be not removed until it has accomplished its purpose, namely, the sanctification of your heart?

(4) If it were your choice either to be fully delivered from the cross, or to give it into the hands of the Lord, would you then choose the former or would you say, “No, I do not choose to be delivered from it, but I shall give it over entirely into the hands of the Lord”?

(5) Does it lead you further away from God? Do you cease to pray, supplicate and seek; or do you increasingly flee to the Lord, frequently bowing yourself silently under His chastisement, and humbly beseeching Him that—in His favor—you might receive some relief and deliverance in your perplexity, which you lay before the Lord as a child who unburdens himself? When you calmly examine these matters, cannot you then discern grace? If such is the case, hold fast to your spiritual state. The cross will then appear lighter to you, it will sanctify you more, and you will discover the good hand of the Lord to your comfort and deliverance. With David you will say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord, that

Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” Ps 119:71,75.

*The Thirteenth Cause of Doubt: A Lack of Spiritual Growth*

*The thirteenth doubt issues forth from a lack of spiritual growth.* Such will argue as follows: “I have been a Christian for so many years already and it is so long ago since I first came under conviction and entered into the covenant of grace. However, I cannot perceive that I have grown in any way. I am the same old person I have been for many years—yes, I cannot perceive anything else but that I have backslidden and that I backslide daily hand over foot. In the beginning I was lively and zealous. I could persevere in overcoming my lethargic flesh, was occupied day and night in prayer, could not get enough of reading the Word of God. The sermons were sweet to me; the company of the godly was a delight to me; I had a sensible love for the godly (who were especially precious and glorious in my eyes); I walked with a tender heart before the Lord, and I was on guard against unrighteousness. However, it is now so entirely different. Everything is so cold, lethargic, listless, sinful, and vain. What else can I conclude from this but that I have never had true grace? For *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day* (Prov 4:18). *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God* (Ps 92:12-13). However, I do not perceive this to be true within myself; the contrary is true. I may therefore not number myself among those who are partakers of grace. Yes, I am thereby tempted at times to believe that the regenerate can apostatize.”

*Answer:* First, the thoughts concerning the apostasy of the saints is but a fleeting temptation. You know better than that, and if you desire more instruction in this regard so that you may be steadfast, turn to chapter 100. [p. ###303]

Secondly, the promises concerning spiritual growth are always fulfilled—be it to a greater or lesser degree—according to the measure which the Lord has appointed for everyone. If a tree is planted in fertile soil, receives an appropriate amount of sunshine and rain, and is in the appropriate climate, it will grow. Such is also true of grace in a believer. If, however, a tree is continually carved or cut, or if people or animals continually shake it back and forth, or if insects are gnawing at the root, its growth will be prevented. Such is also true for a gracious person.

Thirdly, growth cannot be measured by the vehemence of passions. These have been more vehement in former times when the

change initially occurred; when from dead we became alive, and when from darkness we came into the light. They were of a less spiritual nature, however, and you would not be as delighted with them as you now imagine; that is, if you were again in your initial condition. Rather, growth is to be discerned by being increasingly united to Christ, and by the activity which flows out of this union (cf. chapter 90, p. ###159).

Fourthly, it can be true that you are backsliding, for a believer can backslide—not only as far as the outward manifestation of grace is concerned, but also as far as his habitual graces are concerned (cf. chapter 91, p. ###171). However, even in the state of backsliding he remains a believer, and grace is not withdrawn from him. Thus, there is indeed reason for sorrow when you backslide, but there is no reason to believe that you have been without grace prior to this.

Fifthly, upon evaluating yourself in an impartial manner, you will yet perceive that:

(1) you have spiritual light enabling you to know God and Christ; that you are acquainted with spiritual life and the benefits of the covenant of grace in their essential and spiritual nature; and that you discern that all knowledge of the natural man is nothing but darkness when compared to your own.

(2) there is grief and sorrow over your deficiency. Wherever there is feeling, there is yet life.

(3) there is a longing, yearning, and supplicating for the Spirit, comfort, and strength in order to live in a spiritual manner. Wherever there is hunger and thirst after righteousness—after food—there is yet life in the soul.

(4) upon perceiving the eminence of gracious souls, esteeming them, and siding with them and the cause of Christ in opposition to the world, there is yet the manifestation of the nature of a regenerate person.

Is not such the case with you? Therefore, acknowledge that which is yet to be found in you. Esteem it as having been given you by God out of pure grace, and that it will also be preserved in you on the basis of so many precious promises, as well as God's immutability and omnipotence. Therefore, do not capitulate by your backsliding, but hold fast the grace which you have and lift up again the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

We have thus presented to you the primary causes which trouble believers, causing them to doubt their spiritual state; and we have given our responses to them. There are certainly others, but they are of less importance. They can readily be resolved by what has been said in response to the doubts that have been dealt with.

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 CHAPTER NINETY-FIVE
 

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## The Assaults of Satan

The devil is a murderer from the beginning. God has put enmity between believers and the devil, who goes about among them as a roaring lion, using every imaginable device and act of violence to harm them—and if it were possible, to kill them. This we now wish to discuss.

*Satan Assaults Believers*

It can be confirmed irrefutably from God's Word that the devil assaults believers.

(1) This is to be observed in God's declaration: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Gen 3:15).

(2) This is also evident from the names which are given him in light of this, such as, the enemy Matt 13:39, the tempter Matt 4:3, the wicked one Matt 13:19, and the adversary (1 Pet 5:8).

(3) It is conveyed by the description of his work among believers: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8). His works are called "the wiles of the devil" Eph 6:16, buffeting 2 Cor 12:7, shooting of fiery darts Eph 6:16, and beguiling (2 Cor 11:3).

(4) Then there are the exhortations to arm ourselves against him and to resist him. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about" (1 Pet 5:8); "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

You should know, and be prepared for the fact, that the moment you are inclined to repent and begin to turn to Jesus, even if it is

but from afar, the devil will exert himself with a vengeance to use all his wiles and wickedness to prevent this. If he cannot prevent this, he will endeavor to torment and trouble you, and thus keep you from living a holy and joyful life. Therefore, from your side you are also to exert yourself fully. Gird yourself with strength and resist him courageously.

It is needful for you to be acquainted with his devices and operations, so that you will be the less offended and be engaged in battle with all the more valor. We shall therefore present several of his common methods to you. He generally presents himself in a threefold manner: as an angel of light, as a devil, or by concealing himself—thus creating the illusion that we ourselves are involved. It is his latter guise which is most injurious.

### *Satan as an Angel of Light*

That he occasionally approaches us as *an angel of light* is taught by the apostle: “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). This is not truly the case, but it appears to be so in respect to his operations, for he often approaches the godly under the lovely pretense of godliness.

(1) Sometimes he brings to your attention matters which are good in and of themselves, such as a sweet passage of Scripture, or some sweet experiences and motions of the past; and he will endeavor to cause you to reflect upon them. He does so with evil intentions, however, and at an inappropriate time. He does this, for instance, when we are engaged in a specific matter, or if he knows that whatever will be preached will be most beneficial to us. He does this to short-circuit the earnestness with which we are engaged at that moment and to cause us to desist, as the preached Word will then pass us by unnoticed. Having thus been diverted, we shall miss certain things and will come away empty.

(2) He can make use of the fact that someone, whom he cannot mislead in any other way, is very intent on being virtuous. Yes, he may even stir someone up to this (even though a love for holiness proceeds from the heart of the godly person himself). His objective, however, is to render this person unwilling to be subject to God’s dispensation, and cause him to strive continually for greater and loftier things, thereby making him sorrowful, discouraged, and unbelieving, or inducing him to pride.

(3) He may even encourage someone to be virtuous—yes, to the most careful observation of his thoughts, words, and deeds. However, he does so in order to draw him away, so that he might be involved in things which are external to his calling or station in

life. Under a sweet pretense, he will even allure him to things which are contrary to the commandment of God (which is nothing but fanaticism), the person thinking that all that comes to mind is from God. There are then no limits to what he can entice a man. He may also cause one's conscience to be very sensitive, so that a person perceives himself as offending in everything he does, causing him to go his way in much spiritual anxiety. Or he may cause him to see how far he falls short and thus cause him to disown his spiritual state, holding before him that such a life cannot coexist with grace.

(4) He may also stir someone up to be virtuous for the purpose of making him satisfied with the activity itself, keeping him from Christ and the seeking and exercise of justifying faith. Thus, he will subtly rob him of his comfort and that genuine sanctification which flows out of justification—and if someone is not born again, will keep him out of heaven. These matters everyone must keep in mind in order not to be deceived by Satan.

#### He Presents Himself as He Is: A Devil

Sometimes the devil *comes as a devil* in order to inflict terror.

(1) This may occur by way of apparitions, sensations, noises, or in other different ways. This occurs rarely, however, and is generally imaginary, as some are not able to distinguish this from reality.

(2) This may occur when he stirs someone up to surrender himself to him, or something similar. How far he can go in this they only know who have experienced it.

(3) This may occur when he threatens to kill or inflict suffering upon someone, whereby the assaulted person lives in much fear.

It is thus that he torments as a devil. If, however, in addition to this, he is not able to carry out some of his secret designs, he does but little harm, even though he prevents much that is good.

Most of the time the devil conceals himself and seeks to convince man that he has no hand in what transpired, but rather that it is the person himself and that such things proceed from his own heart. Thereby he seeks either to prevent that which is good and to corrupt it, to bring about the commission of sin, or to bring the soul into a state of bewilderment. *In order to prevent that which is good* he has many subtle devices, leveling his assault either on faith, prayer, the hearing of the Word, or sanctification.

#### *His Primary Target: Faith and its Exercise*

First, he knows that *faith* is the fountainhead of spiritual life, and he therefore seeks to obscure faith in all its activity.

(1) He suddenly interjects irrational suggestions, such as, "Is all this in truth? Is not all this imagination?" He will then continually

stir you up to mentally reflect upon these suggestions and to search them out. If we then begin to listen, he gets hold of us and begins to present arguments upon which he demands an answer. And if he gets you that far that you begin to respond by reasoning, he will proceed with his argumentation and will, time and again, present new proofs. When the ability to reason fails, he then proceeds to bring you from fleeting atheistic thoughts to embrace atheism itself. You will then be grievously caught in the net and be incapable of having either comfort or peace, and will not be able to be encouraged in whatever you are doing. Therefore, be on your guard against giving heed to these initial fleeting interjections. Let them pass by, and proceed as before, relying upon the Word of God.

(2) Sometimes he unexpectedly interjects: "Are you really a child of God? Is it really in truth? Have you not deceived yourself? Come, examine yourself, for that which is good can endure a test." At times he does this when we may live sweetly by faith, in the exercise of its extrinsic acts, and when we may have fellowship with God. Or he will occasionally do so when we are least capable of making a judgment about ourselves. If we do listen to him, our faith will receive a setback at the very outset and we shall be prevented from proceeding in this good frame. When it comes to the examination whether our foundation is right, he does his utmost to obscure that which is good and hold before us our corruptions with utmost clarity. He will then suggest: "The godly are such and such, but you are far removed from living such a life! Thus, you have deceived yourself; you have nothing more than an enlightened understanding, and you have nothing but head knowledge. You are a temporal believer and a hypocrite." It is thus that you begin to totter. Therefore, do not listen to those interjections, but proceed with the extrinsic acts of faith, which cannot deceive. For even if you had deceived yourself, it is nevertheless at this point that you must make a beginning. It is safest to practice self-examination when wrestling in prayer; that is, when you are speaking to and transacting with the Lord.

(3) Sometimes he makes your bodily cross to appear much heavier than it is. It then seems as if there is no deliverance, but that it will become heavier and heavier. He will also suggest that this has not come upon you in God's favor, but as a manifestation of His wrath; that it is all because of your sins and is but the beginning of eternal damnation. He knows how to impress this upon you sentence after sentence, doing so in an authoritative and overpowering manner. If you listen to him, his interjections will

begin to have their effect, faith will begin to falter, you will easily become despondent, and your cross will press you down. Therefore, reject all such interjections. Take your cross upon you and follow Jesus; adhere to the promise that you will be sustained and that the outcome will be well.

*His Second Target: Prayer*

Secondly, since the devil knows what strength, comfort, and benefit may be derived *from prayer*, he uses all the power and subtlety at his disposal either to keep you from praying or to trouble you while praying.

(1) He will suggest as many other activities as he possibly can, diverting your thoughts elsewhere, and inducing you to postpone prayer to a given time (having something else to do first). He thus seeks to make a person run around from one thing to the next; and if you follow him in this, you will lose your desire and lively frame to engage in prayer. If you encounter this, be on guard and know that your mortal enemy, the devil, is in pursuit. You must be all the more earnest in your striving to overcome all these obstacles and say to yourself: “It is presently my duty to fight against this, and I desire to be victorious over him in this.”

(2) Sometimes he suggests that prayer is such a difficult work—a work that is not possible to do, for which you are entirely unfit, are presently in too sinful a condition for, and that you should thus wait for a season when you will be more fit for it. If this causes you to look up against prayer, he has gained the advantage over you. Therefore, proceed and do not permit yourself to be hindered. Begin, as incapable as you are, and after your prayer consider whether it was difficult and whether you were incapable of it. You will then judge differently.

(3) Sometimes he gives a deep impression that prayer is both ineffective and fruitless. He will then interject the following: “You neither pray in faith nor do you clearly perceive who God is; instead, you are praying to an unknown God. You do not have a right perception of yourself, do not perceive your sinfulness and unworthiness, nor are you as humble and brokenhearted as a supplicant ought to be. You do not earnestly desire the matters for which you are praying, nor do you have those holy objectives which are requisite for prayer. Therefore, desist, for it is not pleasing to God. You will not receive this matter, for God does not hear such prayers. Have you not sufficiently experienced that all your prayers are in vain? What did you ever receive as an answer upon your prayers?” If to some degree you give heed to such interjections, he will succeed both in impairing the exercise of

faith as you engage in prayer, and in decreasing your measure of earnestness and perseverance. Therefore, be acquainted with his devices and strive all the more earnestly to overcome. Adhere to the promises of God and always remember that the Lord does not hear because of the worthiness of prayer, but upon prayer as being a means ordained by Him. He will grant your desire at His time, in His manner, and according to His measure—and you have indeed experienced this to be so.

(4) Sometimes the devil, as if throwing in a handful of dust, is also busy casting other thoughts into our minds while we are praying. He will also try to bring our soul into a hurried and rushed frame; that is, making it seem as if something needed to be done that could not wait. He will stir up a desire for the activity in which we are currently engaged, cause our hearts to be troubled, or suddenly bring matters to mind of which we have not thought in a long time. Be also acquainted with this device and reject it as not worthy of your attention.

#### *His Third Target: The Means of Grace*

Thirdly, the devil knows that the Lord commonly blesses the assembly of believers, *the ministry of the Word*, and the partaking of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, he goes along to church and will seek to implement his practices upon you there also. He may suggest reasons to you why you ought not to attend, suggest all sorts of thoughts to you, stupefy your mind with sleepiness (if he is permitted to do so), or do a thousand other things to rob you of the Word or to render it ineffective. Remind yourself of this, be acquainted with his devices, be on your guard, and out of hatred and enmity for him, do not in any way cooperate with him. Remind yourself that at such a moment you must do battle and strive for a victory.

#### *His Fourth Target: The Life of Sanctification*

Fourthly, since the devil knows that *sanctification* is so precious to you and in a special sense honors God and edifies your neighbor, he will lay snares everywhere to keep you from its exercise. He may suggest that you are first to be holy within, or that such and such is not your duty. He particularly knows how vividly to hold before you (and to exaggerate) those ulterior motives which he knows are yet to be found in the heart of an imperfect man, and which will readily surface in the best of deeds—yes, even if you were free from them prior to this moment, he will suggest, “See, that is your purpose.” When you sing, pray in a gathering or in the presence of others, drop a tear during a sermon, give a gift, or rebuke and exhort others, he will immediately suggest: “You did

that to be seen of men.” He will thus either prevent you from proceeding, or will rob you of the comfort you would otherwise have derived. Therefore, be acquainted with his wickedness, pay no attention to his interjections, proceed, and exercise this virtue deficiently and yet to the best of your ability—and the Lord will render you stronger in this area.

*His Major Objective: To Bring About the Commission of Sin*

The devil is neither satisfied with preventing you from doing good nor spoiling what you are doing, but also endeavors to bring you *to the commission of all manner of sin*. At one time he will stir up David to be proud and thus to count the people; then he will cause a beautiful Bathsheba to be present in order to entice to fornication. At another time he will give opportunity to be envious, backbite, lie, indulge excessively, or to commit some other sin. It makes no difference to him, as long as he can cause you to fall. He will pursue you at great length and will use a thousand means and devices.

(1) He frequently begins in a remote fashion, concealing his objective and goal. He will create the wonderful illusion for you that you need to relax and will thus seek to make you idle, thereby making you a suitable object for him. He will create the illusion that something is lawful entertainment, and will thus seek to make you elated. He will then suggest various things like a salesman who asks, “Would you like this?” He will go from the one thing to the other to see if there is something in which you might become interested.

(2) He begins with small things which initially do not appear to be sinful, thus concealing their sinfulness. As the soul yields to small sins, she will lose her tenderness and the tender fear of God. He will thus proceed from small or moderate sins to a reflecting upon vain things, thereby endeavoring to present these things as being delightful—and thus the soul will assume a sinful disposition. Therefore, be careful and do not yield to anything, regardless of how small a sin may appear to be.

(3) Then again he will seek to stir you up to the commission of great sins—particularly those sins to which you are naturally most inclined. It is true, he does not know the heart, but he has taken notice of the sin which you commit most frequently, and the sin to which he previously has most easily enticed you. He also listens to the confession of your sins and takes note of all the attending circumstances. From this he concludes what your secret and bosom sins are. These he pursues, and sometimes can present sin so suddenly and as being so delightful to the flesh, that it ignites instantly, as gunpowder. That sin we thought to have under control will then suddenly become

lively again. He will then, so to speak, cause the soul to reel, which may result in a persevering in this sin. Therefore, be on your guard.

(4) When you then perceive too late what you have done, and desire to return to the Lord to have your inner peace, former tenderness, and purity of heart restored, he will then turn the tables and will strive to lead you into the commission of other internal sins: impatience, fretfulness, unbelief, and despair. Therefore, remain steadfast.

*Possible Objection:* These are my sins; they proceed out of my own heart.

*Answer:* Some blame the devil too much in order that they may excuse themselves, and others do not blame him enough. I maintain that your own heart is evil enough to bring forth all these things. Consider this to be a most certain truth: Wherever your own will and affections are involved as far as reflecting upon or executing a given matter—this is your own sin, for which you are accountable.

However, it is also true (a fact of which you should clearly and continually remind yourself) that:

First, the devil seeks to meddle in everything, is continually on the alert to get the better of you, and will, under whatever pretense it may be, either rile you up or push you onward in the commission of certain sins.

Secondly, you may indeed believe the devil to be the instigator:

(1) When the above-mentioned matters occur suddenly to you with unusual clarity, appearing to be most advantageous, sweet, and delightful. (I repeat, they appear to be so, for the devil cannot affect the will, and is not able to render them sweet.)

(2) When motives are suddenly joined to this which are even contrary to your judgment and will.

(3) When in addition these matters are forcefully and authoritatively impressed upon you, in order thus to overwhelm the will by such dominating directives.

(4) If the heart is brought into turmoil, and there is an extraordinary lack of composure, and a driving passion. If you are thus guilty of a sin of commission or omission, then recognize the hand of Satan in this; he is both tempter and instigator. And if some of these sins make some inroads, be it known that he himself will also join in. Thus, you are to understand the devil to be the instigator and you the follower. Be on the alert, and hate the devil so much that you would neither give him a hearing nor obey him.

#### *Satan's Interjection of Sinful Thoughts*

There are also other strifes of which he alone is the author,

having as his sole objective to torment God's children. God's children are not partakers in these sins, except when they permit themselves to be incapacitated to serve God in faith, hope, and love. Only their negative frame is their sin. They should be stronger and thus not permit themselves to be troubled in a sinful manner by his turmoil. However, the *interjections* themselves are not your sin, but the devil's. Nevertheless (take note of this) he will continually seek to convince you that it is your own sin. If you indeed begin to believe this, his interjections will have their effect upon you and bring you in a grievous condition. If, however, you recognize the devil's words as being his language, you will then be able to resist them that much more readily and be less troubled.

These assaults occur in so many different ways and relative to so many different matters, that it is impossible to recite them all. I also do not desire to present them all and would rather be entirely silent on the matter. In order that his wickedness may be exposed, however, and God's children be armed against the insinuation, "You are the culprit and it proceeds from your own heart," I shall present some matters in a general sense.

(1) Some interjections appear to be entirely infantile and ludicrous; however, they are of a far-reaching nature and generally have painful consequences. For example, he can suggest, "Say this, or say that." He may go a bit further and add, "If you don't say this, and if you don't deal with this, you are damned; if you do it, all is well." This goes a step further, if, in a compelling manner, he demands that you acquiesce in this or that, and thereupon seeks to unsettle you, insinuating that you were the one who acquiesced. Thus, that which appears to be so infantile culminated in much agitation.

(2) Sometimes he quickly interjects a passage of Scripture which is difficult to understand, and he will force that upon us either to charge God foolishly or to disown our spiritual state, stirring us up to respond to this. Once a person begins to defend the truth, God, and his spiritual state, the devil will get an increasing hold of him, for he is a devious deceiver. Therefore, one must not respond—no matter how it may go—but allow it to pass by.

(3) Sometimes he will direct a person's attention to eternal election; that the one person is called and converted instead of another person, thus resulting in the damnation of so many people. He will do this in order to accuse God. Once one begins to reflect upon this and desires to defend God, he is caught in the snare. Therefore, resist this and do not respond, for you will thereby become all the more agitated. The Lord's will is holy.

(4) Sometimes he makes use of a bodily or spiritual cross to

accuse God concerning His dealings by interjecting all manner of things which weigh the soul down incomparably more than the cross. However, be on guard against such interjections and ignore them. Adhere to the fact that God is sovereign. He does whatever pleases Him, and will not give an account to man of His doings.

(5) Sometimes he knows how to lead someone, whom he has been sifting for some time, round about in such a manner, that the person, when desiring to come before the Lord or when beginning to pray, appears to be focused on an object other than God. Due to obscure thoughts and the devil's mysterious operation upon the imagination, it will then appear as if he were praying to that object rather than to God. This is a great impediment to prayer.

(6) Sometimes he acts as a prophet and interjects: "Such and such will befall you; you will turn out thus, and you will yet come to the commission of such deeds." He does not only interject this, but he will forcefully impose upon the person that it will certainly come to pass in such a manner. He will repeat this over and over again so that there comes no end to his prophesying. Sometimes he will previously begin to show such things in a dream and would wish this dream to be perceived as being of divine origin in order that he may make it more emphatic. Subsequent to this he will again make use of this dream and will impress the imagery of these matters in such a manner that it causes much agitation. And thus he afflicts the body and the soul by generating fear for future matters which he has foretold.

(7) Sometimes he comes with fiery darts and evil thoughts about God, doing so with such vehemence and persistence, that the soul has no rest day or night. The poor soul is then mortally wounded, and can neither endure nor resist those thoughts. They return with increasing force, and it appears as if those images are his own thoughts—which aggravates his misery.

In these and similar assaults the devil operates under cover. His entire effort and device is to suggest that it is not he who interjects such thoughts, but that they proceed from the heart of the assaulted person himself. He will suggest that such sins cannot coexist with grace, and that therefore the person will be eternally damned. And when would there come an end to these assaults if the Lord at His time did not intervene and rebuke Satan?

#### *How Interjections of Satan May Be Distinguished from a Person's Own Thoughts*

*Question:* Do not these thoughts originate with the person himself? It seems to me that all this proceeds from my own heart. If I

only knew that they were the sins of the devil and his interjections, I would already be half delivered. Can we know that this is so—and if yes, whereby can we know this?

*Answer:* First, all sinful frames of unbelief, despondency, fretfulness, and despair are a person's own sins, even though they at times are caused by the assaults of Satan. The initiative did not come from the person, but from the devil. You have given him too much room to operate, and you have become excessively troubled by it. You should not have paid so much attention to it.

Secondly, let us assume that all the things described came forth out of your own heart. Then what? Is it unforgivable? No; Christ stands ready to receive all those who are heavy laden with sin—also the chief of sinners and blasphemers (1 Tim 1:13).

*Evasive Argument:* I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that is unforgivable.

*Answer:* This is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, for there is no remorse over that sin. Instead, it grieves you, you are oppressed by it, and you pray.

Thirdly, you should know that these and similar experiences are the lot, by far, of the majority of God's children. Should it therefore surprise you that it also befalls you?

*Evasive Argument:* My disposition is entirely different, however. I have not found it in the things mentioned, and I have never heard nor read of a similar disposition.

*Answer:* Perhaps you know but little of what others have experienced, and thus you cannot say, "Others do not experience this." If you therefore calmly examine the cases described above, I believe that you will find your case there. I did not want to deal with them more distinctly and comprehensively than that. He who experiences these things will be able to detect his own case from these implicit presentations.

Fourthly, that the interjections mentioned are not yours, but rather the sins of the devil, can be ascertained when:

(1) They occur suddenly, unexpectedly, and as lightning—even when one is involved in the performance of a good and holy work. For all that proceeds from our own heart gradually takes shape by way of reasoning, and generally is triggered by a given occasion.

(2) They are forcefully imposed upon us against our will, and in a manner whereby we cannot avoid it. The soul rejects it and wishes neither to think upon it nor to approve of it in the least. Nevertheless these thoughts return time and again. It is thus evident that we are merely suffering as someone who is being

beaten, and that these arrows are being fired from without. Therefore, use your mind and judge accordingly.

(3) They are accompanied with terror so that the soul immediately loses its composure, becomes very agitated, and becomes incapable of reasoning rationally. The very opposite is the case when sins proceed from a person's own heart.

(4) The interjections are unnatural and are thus repulsive to our nature. If this is your experience, you may and must be assured that they are not your sins, but rather the devil's. Therefore, you ought not to be that troubled by them, but resist the devil with contempt.

*Question:* There are some with whom the thought may yet occur: "There are times when I can truly feel that they are not of an external source, but are my own thoughts."

*Answer:* A person is frequently ignorant of the manner in which his soul functions, and he is therefore unable to distinguish what proceeds from the representation or interjection of Satan, or from himself. Since, however, we are of the opinion that we do understand this, we are of the opinion that they proceed from the soul herself. When another person utters dreadful things, you will also understand what he is saying. It troubles you, and yet you know that they are not your sins, but rather those of the one who is speaking. Such is also true here.

Secondly, you must also know that when the devil has been driven away from you, you will yet maintain a fearful disposition for some time as a result of what had previously been interjected. These things have also not been erased from your memory as yet; however, it is nothing more than a memory. However, this fearful disposition and the memory of it is not the sin. Indeed, this fearful disposition even proves your love for God, for you wish neither to hear nor think any foolish things about Him.

#### *The Lord Enjoins His People to Battle Against the Devil*

It does not suffice to know that those fiery darts have been shot by the devil, for we shall thereby not be delivered from them. Rather, it is the Lord's will that we shall battle against the devil, and in the way of strife He will give the victory. You may ask: "What shall I do?"

(1) The best you can do in this respect is to ignore, resist, and make no response; let it all pass by. Consider this to be similar to someone standing by your window and continually yelling these things at you, which would be very troublesome and grievous to you. However, you would not be as upset as if you yourself were speaking these things.

(2) View this as an affliction—just as if you had bodily pain. Remain quiet, possess your soul in patience, and always consider the hand of God to be in it. The Lord has decreed it to be so, wants to keep you humble, and has determined *how far it will go* (Job 1:12).

(3) Hold fast to your faith. Even though it is not in lively exercise, let it nevertheless be at the bottom of your heart. Therefore, ascertain by way of your previous experience that you are a child of God; however, for the moment refrain from examining yourself.

(4) Know that the Lord Jesus has conquered the devil and has crushed his head (Gen 3:15). His dominion has been eradicated Heb 11. Therefore, be of good courage, considering that he is a conquered enemy.

(5) Consider the intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:32).

(6) Believe that the outcome will be good. This is according to the promises, and has been confirmed by the examples of others and your own experience during other seasons of strife. The more severe your trials are, the greater will be the measure of comfort, peace, joy, and strength the Lord will grant you. You yourself will realize that during such strife you are kept from many other sins and manifestations of pride.

(7) Be much in prayer. If you feel that you have but little strength to persevere earnestly and to enlarge upon your request, then look time and again to the Lord. Let the Lord see and hear your turning to Him, as well as your sighs and your ejaculatory prayers. Therefore, wait also upon Him from whom your help must come, and do not neglect your devotional exercises.

(8) Persevere during this season of darkness and agitation. Follow the Word of God, and direct your goings accordingly—both in living a godly life as well as in the performance of your calling. Always keep yourself occupied therein, for things will never be more difficult for you than when you are idle.

(9) If you can avail yourself of an experienced minister or another strong Christian, reveal your strife to them and do not try to grapple with it alone. The opportunity to pour out your heart to them, their support, as well as their intercession will be a suitable means to be encouraged—and from the moment you may receive some courage, you will increase in strength.

#### *Believers Exhorted to Render Strong Resistance to Satan*

Therefore, be determined to give strong resistance. To be encouraged in doing so, stir yourself up to reflect upon these matters.

First, it is the will of God that His children would jointly form

an army under their Prince and King Jesus, in order to battle against the devil and his angels. Such a battle is expressed in the following passages: “Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels” (Rev 12:7); “Behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And the armies ... followed Him upon white horses” Rev 19:11,14. The Lord Jesus has destroyed the devil by His death; that is, He has removed from him all power he had over His people. By making satisfaction for their sins by His death, He has delivered them out of the hands of the tyrant to whom they had become subject through sin, so that he has no dominion over them whatsoever—nor ever will have. In His wisdom and goodness, however, God has granted him some limited power to assault the army of Christ as an enemy, so that His children may be exercised in battle and may achieve victory over him while thus engaged—to their glory and his shame. Since it is thus a fact that you have joined an army at war, it behooves you to fight valiantly, for all who are in this army oppose this enemy—doing so under the supervision of our General and the holy angels. Therefore, be willing and valiant.

Secondly, when we consider the nature of this enemy, we observe that he has a deadly and dreadful hatred for our beloved Lord Jesus, and for all who cleave to Him—and particularly for you. This hatred causes him to rage vehemently, and he, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). He is subtle, cruel, and tireless in seeking to rob you of your advantage, to harm you, and to hinder you in your conversation. This must arouse your hatred against him in return. Observe this in David so that you may emulate him: “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Ps 139:21-22).

Such hatred will not allow him to have the pleasure to prevail over you in a given matter, and to triumph over you. This hatred will even motivate you not to permit him to remain near you. It will motivate you to chase him away so that he will flee from you. This hatred will cause you to rejoice when you trample him under foot and thwart his actions. God has given you the ability to hate. It is a natural propensity, and therefore use it most vehemently against him.

Thirdly, it is a very shameful thing if you permit him to gain the victory over you by carelessness, unbelief, or by yielding to your lusts—lusts which he stimulated and stirred up in you. For be assured that in a subtle manner he has his hand in everything. How shameful it

will be when you, upon returning to the Lord, are rebuked by Him for having been so fainthearted by either having yielded to him immediately or by having rendered him but little resistance! On the other hand, it is a glorious matter if you have valiantly fought against his assaults, even if you were wounded in doing so.

Such valor will give you much freedom to approach unto the Lord. How sweet it is when the Lord shows that He takes pleasure in your having been engaged in warfare (even if you did so with but little strength), since you have battled with all your strength and in the uprightness of your heart! How sweet it is when the Lord, in response to this, grants you some of the hidden manna, which He has promised to those who overcome! How sweet it is when He says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!” (Matt 25:21).

Fourthly, the devil is a conquered enemy, and therefore the victory is certain. The Lord Jesus, as the Seed of the woman, has bruised his head Gen 3:15, and has destroyed him by His death (Heb 2:14). He has spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, and has triumphed over them by way of the cross (Col 2:15). He would indeed be a fainthearted warrior who would not dare to attack a mortally wounded enemy who is already down and yet struggles a bit. God has permitted the devil to still struggle in order to grieve him by having a poor son of man despise, trample upon, and inflict deadly wounds upon him. He will never again regain power over a child of God. He may inflict some wounds, but every believer will ultimately conquer him in the power of Christ and then they shall jubilate: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:54-57). “They overcame him (*the accuser of the brethren who has been cast down, the devil*) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11).

Therefore, be valiant against him. Be aware of your weakness, however, and do not trust in your own strength, for this could suddenly cause you to fall. Stay close to the chief captain, Jesus. Take refuge by Him, take hold of His strength, and fight by His strength. Pray without ceasing: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Be careful and take unto you the whole armor of God, gird your loins about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness; let your feet be shod with the preparation

of the gospel of peace; and take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph 6:13-18). Therefore, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

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CHAPTER NINETY-SIX

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The Power of Indwelling Corruption

Indwelling corruption is the most powerful of all causes of backsliding. In regeneration God grants His people spiritual life by uniting them to Christ. This life is predisposed toward growth—and indeed it does grow. You would be able to observe this if you would compare your current condition with your condition when you were first changed. As it is true in the natural realm that the one person becomes taller and stronger than another, so it likewise occurs in the spiritual realm. In the natural realm a person will grow until he reaches full maturity, and then his growth ceases. However, in the spiritual realm perfection is reserved for eternity. Here one longs and strives for it, but in this life he does not attain it. In the natural realm one person will mature in a healthy manner, increase in strength, and retain his strength as it increases. Another person will, however, be hindered in his growth by many trials; and by way of illness or other occurrences he may lose his strength. A man may even become as weak as a child. Such is also the case in the spiritual realm. The one is as a plant which matures in its youth. He is as a shining light which arises until it shines forth at full noon. He goes from strength to strength, and flourishes like the palm tree and a cedar in Lebanon. Another person, however, encounters many things that impede him, and he loses his strength. Indwelling corruption, which at times gains much strength, is among the causes of a decrease in strength. It is this we now wish to discuss.

*It Torments and Grieves Believers*

That indwelling corruption greatly torments and grieves believers is evident from:

(1) The complaints of the saints: “O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear?” (Isa 63:17); “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:23-24).

(2) Such texts in which believers confess the power of indwelling corruption: “Iniquities prevail against me” (Ps 65:3).

(3) Such texts in which saints pray to be kept from this. “Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me” (Ps 19:13).

(4) Related warnings. “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30); “But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13).

#### *It Does Not Have Dominion over Believers*

Since regeneration is imperfect, the old man always remains present in the regenerate person. The old man retains its nature, ignorance, will, affections, and delight in sin—all this under the pretense of being honest, prudent, and delightful. In reality, however, the old man abhors that which is good, considering it to be aggravating, disadvantageous, distasteful, and impossible. It is thus that the warfare between the flesh and the spirit is engendered. “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). In this battle, at times the one wins and at another time the other wins. To the extent that the one wins the other loses. The spirit will never expel the flesh entirely. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after” (Phil 3:12). In turn, the flesh will never expel the spirit entirely, nor have dominion and be triumphant over it. “His seed remaineth in him ... because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9); “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). To have dominion is to have fully prevailed over a given party, so that the conquered one surrenders and subjects himself to the conqueror, thereby rendering obedience. This will never be the case here. The flesh does receive such a measure of strength that it can activate both the natural faculties of the soul as well as the members of the body. This enables it to execute its desire in a manner which cannot be prevented by the spirit. However, the regenerated man can never be brought to the point—not for one moment—that he would subject himself to the will of the flesh for the purpose of

rendering obedience to it, either willingly or unwillingly. The regenerated man will always oppose, even if it were but by sighing against it—thus showing his aversion and crying out as if violence were done upon him. A man can take a child by the arm against his or her will and cause the child to walk rapidly alongside of him. The child will indeed move his or her feet; however, not for the purpose of walking, but rather to avoid falling. Every step is an act of resistance. Such is also true when the spirit is overwhelmed by the power of indwelling corruption.

*Causes Whereby Indwelling Corruption Exerts Great Strength at Times*

At times indwelling corruption functions in its customary manner; that is, by enticing and drawing to that which is evil, and hindering and defiling that which is good—all the while enduring continual resistance from the principle of spiritual life. Occasionally it will receive greater strength, however, and will gain a greater advantage over the spirit. This can be caused by:

(1) God withdrawing His normal influence in a small measure in order to try a person, to humble him, to make Jesus more precious to him, and to cause him to rely more on the strength of the Lord. When this occurs, spiritual life cannot withstand the great power of indwelling corruption.

(2) The occurrence of certain circumstances—be it a fear for one's life, or the loss of honor and belongings—which previously did not exist, causing the lusts to be stirred up, and to become capable of seducing man into the commission of certain sins. This can happen by way of a sudden and unexpected incident, or by the duration of a certain situation—and thus results in spiritual life being subdued.

(3) A change in the condition of the body whereby a person becomes more capable of a given sin. The body will then be more stimulated and stirred up to be entertained by such a sin. The condition of the body will trigger many sins, thereby igniting the lusts of the soul, and the soul in turn will indulge in her lusts by way of the body.

(4) The devil being given a greater measure of freedom whereby he assaults a person with new devices against which such a person is neither armed, nor yet has had any experience. A person will be readily overcome by this, and spiritual life will be in such bondage that it can hardly move one way or the other.

*The Effects of Indwelling Corruption*

The effects of the extraordinary power of indwelling corruption

are both sinful, grievous, and dangerous, for indwelling corruption affects all the faculties of the soul and the body.

First, it activates the *intellect*. This faculty is the first and essential beginning of man's activity. The lusts of the old man are, however, frequently stirring at an early stage already; they will affect the intellect and even stupefy it. We shall thus neither see the sinfulness of sin and its harmful consequences, nor consider the omniscience, omnipresence, goodness, and righteousness of God. We shall then quietly forget the Lord; or if the Lord manifests Himself to some degree (or if the new nature by faith views itself as in the presence of God), this view will make no impression nor yield any power to resist sin.

Secondly, even the *will* can be assaulted. The new man abhors that which is evil because of its hostility toward the will of God, and finds delight in that which is good as being pleasing to God. However, the old man has a will contrary thereto. This so overpowers the faculty of the will that the new man does not have the power to activate either its aversion for sin or its desire for virtue. Even when, in spite of the vehement manifestation of lust, the new man manifests itself in some measure and strives to break through, it will succumb when a sinful desire violently draws the person away to the commission of sin. The act itself is then committed, so that it appears that the will in its entirety had no other desire but to commit evil. Even when we are not in the violent throes of our lust, we often cannot make a complete and heartfelt resolution from that moment on to depart fully from this sin, never to commit it again, but to be on guard against it and to battle it with all our might. Occasionally we shall make such a resolution, but it is feeble, superficial, does not encompass the very recesses of the heart—and thus wavers. Yes, we shall even accuse ourselves of not dealing with God in an upright manner. Nevertheless, there is some uprightness, but its efficacy is such that it is not capable of banishing the lust and sensibly taking control of the entire will. As far as remaining steadfast, there is an added feeling of hopelessness, knowing that all previous resolutions have proven to be unfruitful.

Thirdly, this indwelling corruption vehemently stirs up *the affections*, and once the affections have been set in motion, they can tolerate neither consultation nor delay, but as madmen they will run to execute that sin. They set the entire mechanism of man's inborn tendencies in motion and will drive a man on with insane intensity. The affections thus set everything in motion for the satisfaction of our lusts, and if the new man in any way opposes itself to this, he will be assaulted with all their might. Observe this

in the following passages: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15); “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11).

Fourthly, the inner man having been overcome by indwelling corruption, this corruption now permeates the motions of soul and body. It sets our thoughts in motion to reflect upon the sin at hand and to find delight in such thoughts, knowing that such a thing either never will come to pass, could come to pass, or that we would not want to commit the deed. Yet, one will stir up his lusts toward the commission of that deed. Indwelling corruption will also move us to the commission of *the deed itself*. It will activate the members of the body, and for that purpose will utilize the eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet, and all members which are involved, in the commission of a sin. It is not satisfied with having committed the sin at hand only once, but it wants to commit this sin by renewal.

#### *Believers Will Commit the Same Sins Again*

There is no sin from which a regenerated person is safeguarded in an absolute sense. No one can say: “I shall never fall into that sin.” A person will never be delivered from the indwelling corruption of his nature. It will always prevent and defile that which is good, always stir up lusts, and daily cause a man to offend in many things, doing so either out of carelessness, or due to the sudden occurrence of an event. At times there is a very besetting sin, however, which is triggered by the disposition of the body or because the body is repeatedly stimulated due to there being continual opportunity for this sin. The power of this is such that we repeatedly fall into it. This can particularly be true of a sin which occurs in secret, and thus without the knowledge of any other person. It can also happen that one falls into a heinous sin which is punishable by civil law, being accompanied with great offense. However, such a great fall generally causes us to have a greater aversion for that sin than other sins, so that we shall no longer be tempted by this sin our entire lifetime. It can nevertheless happen—and occasionally it does happen—that such a person by renewal falls into such heinous sins, particularly such sins which are triggered by the disposition of the body. This does not only relate to the renewed commission of this sin in its prevailing intensity before a heartfelt repentance from this sin has occurred (so that it is more to be considered a continuation rather than a succumbing); but one may also fall again into this sin after having

mourned over it in a heartfelt manner, having received Christ unto reconciliation, and having made a resolution against that sin. Sometimes this occurs shortly thereafter. It may appear at times as if that sin has been overcome—yes, even mortified—so that we no longer fear it. And yet, it can nevertheless happen that we fall into it by renewal.

- (1) The examples of Abraham, Isaac, Lot, and Peter teach us that there is a falling into the same sin.
- (2) The seed of all corruption is still within a person—and thus also of that sin.
- (3) There is no promise in God's Word that someone will not fall again into that sin into which he has once fallen.
- (4) Believers are capable of falling into other sins; why then can they not fall into the same sin again?
- (5) When God withdraws His Spirit, spiritual life will be too weak to resist that same sin when it resurfaces. This is particularly true when there is every opportunity for it, the body is stimulated, and the devil assaults.

*The Response of the Converted Person to His Indwelling Corruption*

*Objection:* This is the true condition and life of an unconverted person, and such persons must therefore not be considered as being converted.

*Answer:* If someone were thus inclined to all manner of sin at all times, and would be without strife in this regard (there being no conflict between light, the conscience and the lusts, but rather between will and will, affection and affection); and if all this would transpire without a sorrowful languishing under it—without seeking, supplicating, weeping for forgiveness, receiving Jesus unto sanctification as well as justification; without repeated restoration and a walking in the fear of God—then I will admit that such a person is not converted. He ought not to comfort himself with his weakness and the fact that saints fall into sin. Wherever true grace is to be found in the heart, however, and when such persons come into the above-mentioned condition, the following matters will manifest themselves—sometimes more, sometimes less.

First, their indwelling corruption is not so powerful relative to all sins. The reason the regenerate forego many sins is neither because their nature is disinclined toward them, nor due to the absence of temptation, nor because they find no delight in besetting sins—as *is* true in the life of the unconverted. Rather, they resist other sins, opportunities, and stimuli due to being united with God; they fear God, and have love for the will of God. They

are thus not vulnerable to every type of sin. However, this particular besetting sin has too much power. Spiritual life battles against this sin, (as has been shown above) but it cannot prevail. It is overpowered and taken captive, but it will never be dominated and brought into subjection.

Secondly, indwelling corruption does not always exert its power toward a given besetting sin. Spiritual life battling against it frequently has the upper hand, arises from falls, resists temptations, avoids opportunities, prayerfully takes hold of the Lord's strength, and remains close to the Lord. One thus proceeds sweetly, carefully, and in the fear of the Lord, and thereby is kept from that sin for a longer or shorter time, even though it will manifest itself again and will seek to resurface.

Thirdly, when indwelling corruption has the upper hand, the believer is neither joyous nor happy—as an unconverted person would be when he may indulge in his lust without harm or shame. Instead, there is much sorrow and heartache. He languishes and spends his life in sorrow, since (due to this sin) he must miss communion with God, peace, and the sensible assurance of being reconciled. Furthermore, his spiritual life weakens, and he cannot glorify God in his station in life. The more vehemently his lust appears to have free reign in this trial, the more the grief of his soul is multiplied. Furthermore, when the temptation is most vehement, and if he is prevented from committing his sin, he will not be irritated as the unconverted are, but will rejoice and thank the Lord for it. Hereby we thus discover the distinction between the commission of sin by the unconverted and the power of indwelling corruption as it strives with grace in the converted. Add to this what we have said in chapter 14 concerning prevailing and incidental sins.

From this, one can be clearly convinced whether sin has dominion over him. If sin still has dominion over you, let this convince you that you are yet in an unconverted state, and that if you remain thus and die in that condition, you will be damned eternally. Let it therefore stir you up to flee from the wrath to come by a speedy repentance and exercise of faith in Christ—doing so while He is yet offered to you and before it is too late.

If you may perceive that sin has no dominion over you, but that there is spiritual life in you which strives against indwelling corruption—even though it frequently suffers defeat—acknowledge the grace of God, be grateful for it, rejoice over it, and let it be a means to strive against indwelling corruption with renewed courage.

For, *on the one hand*, you taste how bitter it is to be a captive to sin; how you are continually living in bondage, restless, grieved,

and full of fear; how God, in whose communion there is joy and life, hides Himself from you. You taste how vulnerable you are to all manner of temptations by the flesh, the devil, and the world; how the habitual disposition of spiritual life weakens; and how impossible it is for you to root out this indwelling corruption, which so often flourishes and increases in strength when spiritual life is weak. You taste how incapable you are to attain to the purpose of your calling: the glorification of God; and how fearful you are of death and the prospect of expiring in darkness and misery. *On the other hand*, you do know that your inner spiritual life craves help to be delivered from this prison and to be set at liberty; and how it cries out for such help. You are acquainted with the immutability of the love of God toward you, which you can conclude from the conviction that the Holy Spirit of grace is within you. You know the fullness of the Lord Jesus, who is ready to communicate to you grace for grace out of His fullness. You know how becoming it is for you, being the temple of the Holy Ghost, to cleanse that temple and to expel indwelling corruption. Oh, how delightful it is to repent! It renders joy to God, the Lord Jesus, angels, ministers, other believers, and to you yourself. Sin will then lose its potency, all tasks will seem easier to you, and you will increase in strength.

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CHAPTER NINETY-SEVEN

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Spiritual Darkness

In regeneration man is drawn out of darkness into marvellous light. He receives enlightened eyes of the understanding and perceives invisible realities. Those matters, which are hidden for the natural man and viewed from a natural perspective, are viewed in an entirely different manner by the person who has been illuminated. He who was darkness itself becomes enlightened in the Lord, and the Holy Spirit shines in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This light gladdens the heart, warms the soul, causes it to burn with love, and changes and sanctifies the entire man. Therefore, they who begin to see this light become so enamored with it that they desire to be led further and further into this light. Indeed, in doing so they do not take note of the distinction between the light of *beholding* (which may and must be desired here below, but is reserved for heaven), and the light of *faith*, which is bestowed upon those who walk upon earth, enabling them to make their way through darkness with joy. By not considering this distinction, they are not satisfied to walk in the light of faith, but wish to live here in the light of beholding. They thus bring trouble upon their soul and begin to think that they are yet entirely in the dark and unconverted. Yes, this can cause great darkness to come upon them, so that even the light of faith becomes so dim that they cannot perceive any light.

This spiritual darkness is not identical to what the unconverted have, who are yet entirely blind. This also does not compare to what beginners in grace experience, in whom there is a glimmer of light. We also do not understand by this the waves of darkness which occasionally come upon a believer and readily dissipate.

*Spiritual Darkness: The Spiritual Disease of a Christian*

This darkness is, however, *a spiritual disease of a person who has made some progress in the Christian life*. In the absence of the normal illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit, and due to the residual darkness of his old nature, the light which is in him becomes so dim and is so obscured that he now beholds the spiritual matters, which he previously perceived with clarity, as a distant glimmer and only depicts what has transpired in the past by way of memory. This causes him to be without joy, warmth, and direction; and to live in fear and anxiety, causing him to wander about aimlessly, as in a desert.

Not only does experience teach that the believer does come into such darkness (so that many do not need any other proof except their own case), but the Word of God shows us abundantly that this is so. Those who are in such a condition need to take note of that, since they generally come to the conclusion that they are without grace, being of the opinion that the godly do not come into such a condition. That which befell Abraham, the father of the faithful, also befalls his children. “And, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him” (Gen 15:12). Job testifies of this concerning himself: “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him” (Job 23:8-9). The church complains of this: “He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light” (Lam 3:2). The Lord threatens this: “Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness” (Jer 13:16). The prophet gives counsel to those who are in such a state: “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God” (Isa 50:10). There are seasons of darkness as a result of persecution and the absence of comfort, as well as due to blindness. However, these generally coexist in God’s children, for external darkness does bring forth internal darkness.

*The Causes of Spiritual Darkness*

Natural vision can be obstructed by various causes: the disappearance of the sun, the thickening of clouds, the interference of opaque objects, disease of the eyes, or staring at the sun. Spiritual darkness likewise has various causes:

- (1) the disappearance of the Sun of Righteousness, the Lord

Jesus Christ, and the withholding of the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit;

(2) the devil obscuring this light by clouding the issues, generating the smoke of error and heresy, generating false light, obscuring the truth, and seducing a person by way of deceivers;

(3) a person not giving heed to the light of faith, considering this to be too insignificant; a weakening of love for the truth, a striving for something higher; an insisting on being illuminated by the light of beholding, and by being desirous of receiving light other than that light by which the Lord commonly leads his people;

(4) the turning away of our eyes from the light by yielding to our lusts, by closing our eyes, and by strewing sand in our eyes—whereby the truth in her efficacy and preciousness is not perceived;

(5) exerting our spiritual vision too much to comprehend the perfections and incomprehensible ways of God. This, rather than yielding us more light, will bring us into more darkness. For when we depart from the light of God's Word and cannot attain to an immediate beholding, our corrupt intellect and irrational reason<sup>11</sup> will come to the foreground, deceiving the soul with false contemplations whereby true light is increasingly obscured.

### *The Consequences of Spiritual Darkness*

This spiritual darkness brings believers into a sorrowful and sinful state, for:

First, there will be *despondency*. The light of the eyes is good and rejoices the heart. Dark days, on the contrary, are days of sorrow; the night encloses everything and oppresses the heart. Such is also true for believers who have seen the light, who were accustomed to walk in the light of God's countenance, and did rejoice in the light, but now must miss that light, and are surrounded by thick darkness. All of this will distress the heart, and a dismal sorrow overcomes them, so that everything, so to speak, grieves them. They think about former days when the Lord caused His light to shine upon them, and they traversed through darkness by His light. This has now disappeared, however, and there is grievous darkness.

Secondly, during darkness *the wild beasts* come forth out of their holes. Likewise all manner of sinful motions manifest themselves in this darkness, such as unbelief, despondency, fretfulness, and murmuring. Even fleeting atheistic thoughts arise in the heart, as well as all manner of sinful reasoning to bring the soul into additional darkness.

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<sup>11</sup> Dutch: "redelooze rede."

Thirdly, darkness is *a fearful thing*. There is a terror by night, and an arrow which flies by day (Ps 91:5). Such is also the case here. We shall hardly be able to discern what grace is, and are not able to perceive it in ourselves. We shall be fearful of the wrath of God and damnation. The devil shoots forth his terrifying arrows; our thoughts and dreams will terrify us, and we shall neither find rest nor a place of refuge anywhere.

Fourthly, he who, in the dark, walks across a moor in which there are many trails, *will easily go astray*. Such is also the case here. “He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth” (John 12:35). When he is alone, his thoughts will wander, and when he is among people, he will stumble in his words. If he must undertake something or if a decision needs to be made, he will err in his choice, and the outcome of his endeavor will be wrong. Everywhere he is ensnared, and he is in bondage in whatever he undertakes.

Fifthly, he who walks in darkness *will readily stumble* over something that lies upon his pathway, not being able to see it—and irregularities cause him to stumble readily. Such is also true here. God’s ways are no longer in his heart and he walks upon rough ways. Here he sees something and there he hears something, and it offends him immediately. Here there are temptations to err in doctrine, there to sin, and there opposition reveals itself. Everywhere there are snares, but he does not see them. This causes him to be easily ensnared, and the more he moves about, the more he becomes ensnared. He cannot deliver himself, for he knows not where he will place his foot.

Sixthly, darkness is *an unfruitful season*. In the darkness of winter, trees stand there barren and as if they were dead. Near the south and north poles hardly any vegetation or grass grows, and whatever is sown or planted in a place which cannot be reached by the sun, cannot grow and will be in a sad condition. Such is also the case here. When a thick darkness envelops the soul, she does not bring forth any fruits worthy of repentance. She is barren and weak, does not give the Lord who has planted her any delight, is not an ornament to the church, and this planting of the Lord is neither a matter of joy to other godly persons nor attractive to the unconverted. During that season she will thus not answer to the purpose for which she has been appointed.

Seventhly, during darkness it is *cold*. During the winters and beneath the pole-caps everything becomes immobile due to the frost. Such is also true here. When someone comes into a state of darkness, he will readily slip into a state in which he is cold, stiff,

and insensitive. We shall shortly discuss this state of insensitivity more comprehensively.

### *Means to Avoid Spiritual Darkness*

Since the state of darkness is of such a harmful nature, everyone must see to it that he does not come into such a condition, and therefore:

- (1) Be on guard against those things whereby you come into such a condition—as has been shown earlier.
- (2) Highly esteem the light you have, however little it may appear to be in your own eyes.
- (3) Rejoice in the fact that you are acquainted with God, Christ, and the way of salvation. Furthermore, rejoice that you understand the Word of God in its spiritual sense, since you see so many who are without this light. “Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (John 5:35).
- (4) Give heed to the light which shines forth in the Word of God, direct your goings accordingly, and walk in it. “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you” (John 12:35).

If you have been overcome by darkness, do not give up courage, for many of the godly come into this condition. It is not a sign of being without grace. You still know the Lord and His way, though from afar. This darkness is a burden to you and all your desire is for the light—not merely to be able to see, but in order to be gladdened, warmed, directed, and sanctified by it. The Lord will by renewal lighten your darkness and will again lift up the light of His countenance over you. You will experience that this season of darkness has been a school for you in which you have learned much. Especially do not yield to this darkness, but endeavor to be delivered from it. I do not need to hold before you the repugnant nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light to stir you up thereby, for you have experienced both conditions. I merely wish to give you some direction.

### *Directions for Those Who Struggle with Darkness*

First, be assured that you will not immediately return to the light which you have previously enjoyed. The fleeting rays of light which fall upon you in the midst of your darkness are divine comforts to strengthen you for the darkness which is yet to come. A habitual disposition is only to be attained by way of much exercise. Therefore, be not discouraged if you do not regain this condition at the very outset.

Secondly, be satisfied with the little light that you may yet have, which enables you to understand the Word in its spiritual sense—

even if it neither yields delight nor warmth. It is sufficient to give you direction.

Thirdly, refrain from exerting yourself to have views of lofty matters, but cling humbly to the Word of God. Whenever you read it and whenever a passage of Scripture occurs to you, then think: "This is the truth." If it is a promise, esteem it as such, and do not lift your heart above that Word. At the same time reflect upon God Himself, but do not go beyond what His Word describes Him to be. If there is an exhortation to believe or to practice another virtue, then think: "This is my rule of conduct, and according to this I wish to walk in all simplicity." Thus, by keeping a low profile you will come to the light in the most prudent manner.

Fourthly, deal faithfully with the small measure of light that you have. Do not begin to reason with your natural intellect. Acknowledge it by faith and follow it. In humility and uprightness walk in that light. Do not focus upon your stumblings, esteem yourself to be but a small child. The ordering of your way according to that small measure of light will most certainly be a means to receive a greater measure of light. "If any man will do His will, he will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17); "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Fifthly, maintain your scheduled devotional exercises. If you discontinue these, you will come into more darkness and become more estranged; however, if you maintain these, you will increase in light. Do not pressure yourself to be occupied with this for a long period of time, but do it in upright simplicity. Do not do so to add it to the register of your virtues, for then you would soon become discouraged. Instead, do it with the steadfast objective to use it as a means to receive more light. Read the Word of God, and supplicate and cry to the Lord who hears and sees you—even if you do not behold Him. You nevertheless know Him by means of His Word. Particularly, pray for light, for light proceeds from Him alone. He can open the understanding with one word so that you will understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). He promises to give light and wisdom to those who pray to Him for it (James 1:5). And that which He is able and willing to do, He also will do, and you will yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. One day you will behold His face in righteousness and then you will be satisfied. Amen.

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CHAPTER NINETY-EIGHT

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Spiritual Deadness<sup>12</sup>

Believers are subject to many changes in all aspects of spiritual life. This is also true in respect to a lively or lifeless spiritual frame. By nature, man is entirely dead and estranged from divine life. He has a heart of stone, and at the very best has a stony heart which is not capable of bearing fruit. Some harden their heart and render it more insensitive than was previously the case. By continually heaping sin upon sin and going contrary to their conscience, they sear, so to speak, their conscience with a hot iron, and cause their heart, now having become fully calloused, to be immovable.

In regeneration God removes that heart of stone and grants a heart of flesh in its stead, making it both tender and sensitive. As spiritual life, however, can at times be feeble, likewise there can be but a small measure of spiritual sensitivity in the beginning of spiritual life. One will then not be troubled about many of his secret faults, and there will be but little grief about the absence of great spiritual blessings. Thus, when comparing an immature Christian with a mature Christian, one would think that the immature Christian is in a lifeless condition, whereas comparatively speaking they (when considering their level of maturity) are more lively than mature Christians at certain occasions. For those who have made some progress in spiritual life do backslide in regard to their liveliness, and at times become subject to deadness. Even the most eminent Christian sometimes experiences this for a brief season. It can be that at the outset of his prayer he is in an entirely

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<sup>12</sup> The Dutch word is “dodigheid,” which refers to a deathlike state of insensibility, rather than the state of death.

dead frame—insensitive and without inner motions. As he perseveres, however, he regains his prior liveliness. It can also be, after beginning in a lively manner, that toward the middle or the end he is overcome by such a pervasive deadness that he must desist. This can also take place in regard to the Lord's Supper and other circumstances. Occasionally deadness will prevail for a long time, however, and become the habitual disposition of the soul. It is this disposition that we wish to discuss here. Five matters will be discussed: 1) the fact that believers do come into such a condition of deadness; 2) its causes; 3) its nature and consequences; 4) a word of encouragement for those who are in such a condition; and 5) some guidance relative to this issue.

### *Believers Do Experience Deadness*

That believers do come into such a condition is evident:

(1) From specific passages in which this condition is identified by various terms, such as:

(i) *hardening*: "O Lord, why hast Thou ... hardened our heart from Thy fear?" (Isa 63:17); "Have ye your heart yet hardened?" (Mark 8:17);

(ii) *slumber*: "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (Song 5:2); "They all slumbered and slept" (Matt 25:5);

(iii) *heartlessness*: "... therefore my heart faileth me" (Ps 40:12); "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart" (Hos 7:11);

(iv) *barrenness*: "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass" (Ps 102:4);

(v) *deadness*: "I am as a man that hath no strength: free among the dead" (Ps 88:4-6).

(2) From the prayer of saints for liveliness: "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word" (Ps 119:25).

(3) From warnings relative to this: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13).

(4) From exhortations: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph 5:14).

Add to this the experiences of so many of the godly concerning whom you have either read or heard. From all of this you can perceive that no one should consider it strange when he also comes into this condition. So many of God's children have experienced this, as it is God's way to lead His children by way of deadness to a lively condition.

### *Its Causes*

There are various causes for this. First, deadness sometimes

issues forth from the indwelling corruption of the residual old nature. There is much of the stony heart that still resides in the regenerate, and the old nature is averse to spiritual life and its activity. The regenerated man subdues this and proceeds with his activity. However, at times a man's dead nature will again assert itself, and bring spiritual life into bondage. It will pervade all the faculties of the soul and overwhelm the soul with its deadly stench. And thus both life and liveliness rapidly lose ground and are weakened as far as their disposition is concerned. Wherever spiritual life declines, deadness will increase.

Secondly, when we do not rightly value spiritual life—however feeble it may be—nor cherish it, but yield to lusts; when we do not give proper attention to lesser sins; when we fall from the one sin into the other; and when we frequently commit the same sin so that we become accustomed to it, our conscience will then become more insensitive, and that insensitivity will expand more and more. Furthermore, if more blatant sins are committed by which the conscience is ravaged, deep wounds will be inflicted upon the soul which will cause her to be mortally ill—particularly when the Lord withholds His gracious influences because of these sins. All of this cannot but engender deadness, which frequently is not noticed until we have come so far that we have lost our strength to recover and we become sensible of our insensitivity.

Thirdly, unbelief concerning our spiritual state causes despondency, despondency listlessness, and listlessness discouragement. By these steps we arrive at deadness. We often actively stimulate unbelief and oppose faith. We advance every argument to come to the conclusion that we are without grace, acting as if we had then gained a victory. We then neglect to receive Christ in all simplicity and to entrust our soul and salvation to Him. Since faith is the means whereby one lives spiritually, one shall most certainly be overcome with deadness if faith, instead of being exercised, is suppressed.

Fourthly, erroneous ideas concerning spiritual life are very conducive to bring about deadness. Some are not aware of the fact that spiritual life consists in the enjoyment of union with God through Christ, and that it manifests itself in the conscious yearning of the heart after God, in being united with His will, and in conducting ourselves as being in the presence of God. Instead, such only take notice of the emotions and the sensible motions within, and the clear revelations of God to the soul. They consider only this to be the manifestation of life. If they do not perceive this—which will very frequently be the case—they then imagine themselves to be dead (or at the very best suffer from deadness),

whereas it is possible that neither of the two is the case. However, the cherishing of such thoughts will indeed cause them to come into a state of deadness.

Fifthly, deadness is frequently caused by neglecting to acquaint ourselves with God and continually staying near to Him as being the only delight of our soul—by the neglect of or a casual observance of our scheduled devotional times, doing so more to satisfy the conscience, than to exercise fellowship with God and to strive for increase in spiritual life. Also a spiritless ministry contributes to this in no small measure. Such a ministry leads us astray more than leading us further; it leads to the espousal of error. It can also be due to a lack of direction from and having no fellowship with, the godly. When glowing coals are joined together, they will show forth a lively glow. Upon being separated from each other, however, they will be extinguished and will find themselves in the midst of ashes. This is also true here. Someone who has a melancholy and despondent disposition will also be very vulnerable to spiritual deadness. This will also occur when we are too busy and have too many temporal concerns in either our family or vocation. This will be true when we are overwhelmed by an enduring cross; when we cleave too much to the creature, the godly, ministers, and the goods of this world; or when we are too prosperous in this world.

Sixthly, it pleases the Lord, who is sovereign and holy in all His ways, sometimes to withdraw the normal influences of His Holy Spirit whereby we are made lively. He never engenders hardness of heart, as this would be contrary to His holiness, and He never removes the propensity of spiritual life. He does withhold His operations, however, leaving a person, so to speak, to fend for himself, although He secretly preserves and sustains spiritual life. Furthermore, He gives the enemies within and without free reign to assault spiritual life. He then brings a person in such circumstances that his life is besieged round about, loses its vigor, and the residual hardness of the heart gains the upper hand.

#### *Its Nature and Consequences*

*The nature and consequences of deadness are as follows:*

(1) Its nature pertains to spiritual matters. We can be in a lively frame, perform our calling in a lively manner, interact with people, and be busy with all manner of temporal affairs—and yet be dead and insensitive to spiritual matters.

(2) Such deadness and insensitivity are not a total deprivation of spiritual life and feeling, for spiritual life will permanently remain in believers. Rather, it is a partial deadness, and that in respect to

both measure and time. The one may recede to a lower level than the other, and the same person may at one time be more lifeless than at other times. Yes, there can even be brief intermissions in which someone, who generally suffers from deadness, can be very tender, sensible, and lively, and is thus of the opinion that he has been delivered from it. It is, however, but a ray of sunlight on a dark and cloudy day in order that he may be supported for that which he must still endure.

(3) This deadness does not consist in an absence of sensible emotions, but in the coldness and lethargy of the intelligent will. The person who suffers from deadness retains his spiritual knowledge; he perceives spiritual matters in their essential nature—however, from afar. He wishes to be lively and sensible, but that is then nearly all. As long as someone is able to exercise his intelligent will with composure, he ought not to complain about deadness. Even though there is not a sensible involvement of the affections, his activity may nevertheless be of a more spiritual nature than when his affections functioned in a much more feeling manner. If, however, his acquaintance with spiritual matters does not stir up love in his heart; if the heart closes up when he either thinks of spiritual matters or decides to practice them; if he is listless and lethargic in the performance of a duty (or consequently neglects it); if everything is but as a daydream and, so to speak, but a mental image; and if this is not only true for a short season, but rather is a long and prevailing tendency; if he thus has forgotten all that is good, there only being left a sensitivity about his insensitivity, and a spending of his days in a languishing frame—that constitutes deadness and insensitivity.

Fourthly, let us consider the *consequences* of deadness. Those who previously had a tender heart; who were able to weep sweet tears before the countenance of God either due to love, a yearning within, the missing of God's lovely countenance, or their corruptions, have now a cold heart. The eye cannot shed one tear. The heart cannot bring forth one feeling sigh; instead, everything is, so to speak, of stone. They who previously could live only in the friendly presence of the Lord are now roaming about far from what was their life and love. When they come to the Word of God, which previously was so lively and efficacious, it appears to be but a dead letter. The promises do not encourage, and the threats do not trouble them. The rebukes only make them harder, and the exhortations do not move them. Under the ministry of the Word they are not attentive, and their thoughts flit about from one thing to the next—yes, focus even purposely upon some vain thing near

at hand. Whatever they hear does not penetrate their heart, and they leave church as they came—yes, even worse than when they came. If they set themselves to pray (which previously was a delight), they collapse as a wet rag. There is neither reverence before God nor humility toward Him. Or else they will arise and depart, as they cannot utter a word. Or it can be that some matters are brought forth void of any earnestness or longing to attain them, doing so more intellectually than with the heart. It seems as if heaven is no longer desirable, damnation no longer deters, and the matters of inner peace, comfort, love, a watching over their souls, sin, and virtue no longer have any effect upon them. The company of those godly persons who are lively is a burden to them, and love for the godly has grown cold. They want to be alone and avoid company. They only want to be with those who are also in a state of deadness, so that by each other's wretched complaints they even increase their deadness. Not only is there no desire for the Lord's Supper, but they are fearful of it. They either abstain, or, by much wrestling of the conscience, are brought that far that they are resolved to attend. They are not able to prepare themselves, even though the greatest inner stirrings will occur around this time. Hardly any hunger or thirst is to be detected. When they receive the Lord Jesus by faith—yes, surrender themselves—they do not believe that they have been received by Him. Upon having attended the holy table, the fruit will be that they frequently think that they have eaten and drunk damnation unto themselves. If they have been somewhat enlivened during either the preparation or reflection, they readily return to a barren and dead frame. They hardly find delight in anything, except their insensitivity. They are as those who become faint and at that time would rather wish that they be left alone. The means which are used either to prevent further fainting or to revive them cause them to grieve. They also do not react very well to being aroused out of that sleep. They do not believe that restoration is to be expected for them. They deem themselves not to have been elected, to be without either life or grace, and to be subject to the wrath of God. They believe that they will perish forever. This closes up their heart even more, even though there is apprehension and fear. In one word, it is a deplorable condition—a condition which is even more wretched since all the means of grace are ineffective for them, and all the help of men is vain. However, the Lord knows, secretly sustains, and will once more revive them.

*Encouragement for Those Who Suffer from Deadness*

Fifthly, we shall encourage those who suffer from such deadness.

Even though all the means are ineffectual due to their lack of strength; and even though those who are in a dead frame have a secret aversion for all comfort and encouragement (as a sick person for medicine), the Lord nevertheless uses means when He is pleased to revive a person suffering from deadness. Furthermore, there is yet a desire in such a person to be restored if there were, somehow, counsel and hope for him. The most effective method is to show him that being in such a condition is not a sign of being without grace, and that marks of grace are also to be detected in that condition.

First, to that end it ought to be known that the Lord permits many of His dear children to come into this condition. Those whom He wishes to establish most and use to the benefit of others are made subject to the severest trials and led by Him into this condition. He does this to make known to them what they are and what their ability amounts to when the Lord withdraws His Spirit; thus He will always keep them small and humble. He does this so that they may esteem grace all the more, and not be too dependent upon feelings. Rather, He wants them to live by faith, deem the Word of God more precious, and rest upon it with more confidence. He wants to teach them not to judge others who come into such a condition, but conduct themselves wisely toward those who are in such misery by supporting them. Therefore, do not consider it to be strange when you come into such a condition, but rather that it is the Lord's way, and that He will cause it to be to your best advantage.

Secondly, if you come before the Lord with composure, being fearful of ungratefully denying received grace (which is a blot upon the goodness of God), you will yet be able to perceive that you have grace. Therefore, consider the following matters together, and you will be able to come to a conclusion about yourself.

(1) Reflect for a moment upon former days. Consider your previous convictions, sensitivity, earnestness, tears, and supplications; your looking unto and receiving of the Lord Jesus, sorrow over sin, sweet enjoyment of the Word of God, tender walk before the Lord—and perhaps also your peace, joy, and assurance. You know indeed that you have enjoyed all these things prior to this, and you know furthermore that all God's callings and gifts are without repentance. Even if you are not able to reflect upon these matters in as lively a manner as when you previously enjoyed them, you know nevertheless that all these things cannot proceed from nature and that therefore they are the operations of the Spirit. You would believe with all your heart that they in whom these matters are to be found in truth are in a state of grace.

(2) And regarding the present, are you not acquainted with the Lord as He reveals Himself in the work of redemption? Are you not acquainted with the Lord Jesus in the execution of His suretyship? Are you not acquainted with the frame of a gracious person; that is, the light he receives, the functioning of his faith, his aversion for sin, his love for God, his godly walk before God's countenance, and his desire to serve God in a manner pleasing to Him? Are you not acquainted with all this, approving of and esteeming it—and are you not desirous to be thus? When you compare natural men at their best, and gracious persons at their worst, do you not know this difference to be as great as day and night? Does not your heart go out after the little ones in grace, and does not your soul have an aversion for natural men—even when they are at their very best? Judge now whether someone can perceive of this approvingly in the absence of spiritual light.

(3) Even if your inner motions are presently sluggish, lethargic, and barren, are they nevertheless not there—namely, displeasure about your condition, and a desire to be lively in all spiritual exercises, and for the benefits of the covenant of grace? Are you not sensitive to your insensitivity—not primarily because you fear judgment, but because you are so barren and dead in spiritual things? Is not your deadness your greatest burden? What is able to comfort your soul—something temporal, or is it only God in Christ? Wherever there is feeling, there is life. Since you are therefore sensitive to your spiritual deadness, is not this then an indication that you have life? We are not examining you as to how strong and lively all this is, but rather as to the genuineness of it all.

(4) Are you entirely void of the activities and exercises of godliness, or are there yet sighs, prayers, and a fleeing to Jesus for reconciliation and power to be invigorated again? Do you yet have intermittent seasons when you are sensitive and utter heartfelt prayers with strong crying and tears? If you have to respond in the affirmative, albeit restlessly, due to the small measure, and this liveliness readily disappears, you must nevertheless conclude that there is life. When a sick person still moves his hand and head, yet breathes, and still has a pulse, then he is yet alive. Such is also the case here. Consider all this together and draw the conclusion from this that you possess life; and if you possess life, have courage, for it will not perish. The Lord will by renewal make you lively.

*A Final Directive for Those Who Suffer from Spiritual Darkness*

*The sixth directive* for those who are in a dead frame is that restoration is not to be accomplished by might or power. Such a

person is also not capable of exerting himself. Therefore, I can only suggest such matters which are able to enliven the heart by a calm reflection and meditation of the heart.

First, you are acquainted with the sorrowful condition of lifeless insensitivity. You still can remember and bring before you a lively and active frame, and it is thus not necessary for me to deter you by the one and to stir you up by the other. I only counsel you to consider both conditions quietly. As you focus upon this, permit it to stir your heart; that is, as much as it pleases the Lord. You are but to observe.

Secondly, listen to the knocking and arousing voice of the Lord Jesus and reflect upon the words of the bride: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." She, being in no condition to arise, says, "My beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. ... My soul failed when He spake" Song 5:2,4,6. This means that the reflection upon His friendly invitation, to which I did not respond, causes me to faint, considering the trouble I experienced due to my sluggishness and His departure. Subsequently she begins to seek. Imagine within yourself that the Lord Jesus were saying to you, "My child, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I love you and shall love you; I have become Surety for you, have drawn you out of the world, and shall keep you. I shall take you to Myself in felicity, and therefore neither turn away from Me, remain discouraged, nor respond in unbelief. *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals* (Jer 2:2). I remember the initial manifestation of My love and kindness toward you at the outset of your conversion. This motivates Me to stir you up again. You ought also to remember this My first love and acknowledge that those first motions, which still refresh you when you think upon them, were wrought in you by Me out of love. I am the same, and therefore, awake and arise My fair one." I repeat, take the time to reflect upon this attentively and without resisting in unbelief; let this stir up your soul as much as the Lord will permit.

Thirdly, esteem very highly the least stirring of the Holy Spirit, as well as those stirrings you have enjoyed previously. Do not strive against it; it will cause such stirring to cease. Rather, acknowledge that this has been true grace, for that will invigorate this spiritual motion. It can indeed not harm you if you acknowledge this to be grace, for it leads you to the Lord. Also highly esteem the least motions which you still detect daily. Consider them to be the

supporting and stirring workings of the Spirit, as well as the activity of spiritual life which is suppressed within you and wishes to break through. Thank the Lord for it. You were the unwilling one; otherwise you would have had these stirrings, and would still have them. Quietly yield to them as much as the Lord enables you to.

Fourthly, persevere in the use of the means, even if you do not benefit from them at all; it will not be fruitless. Even if you do not notice this, it still sustains spiritual life, and it occasionally begets sweet and sensitive motions, keeps you near to the Lord, and will yet be a means to your restoration. Listen, read, pray, sing, and have discussions, doing so as one who is powerless and entirely destitute, and as a means which the Lord has sanctified to work thereby. Even if you find this to be difficult, and the flesh would prefer to perpetuate the slumber, pull yourself together and engage yourself in this manner. Permit the Lord to work by means of these things and you will experience that the Lord will make His promises true to you. He will make you glad according to the days wherein you have been afflicted, and the years wherein you have seen evil. And your doxology will be, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps 40:1).

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 CHAPTER NINETY-NINE
 

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## The Perseverance of the Saints

Having considered sanctification, growth in grace, and its decline due to spiritual maladies, it is necessary that we add to this a consideration of the *perseverance of the saints* in grace. When considering this from God's side, it is called a *keeping* (τηρει=ν, *terein*) John 17:15, φυλα&σσειν (*phulassein*) John 17:12, φρουρει-ν, (*phrourein*) 1 Pet 1:5, στηρι/ζειν, (*sterizein*), that is, *to strengthen* 2 Tim 3:3, and βεβαιω~ν (*bebaion*), that is, *to confirm* (1 Cor 1:8). When considering this from the side of believers, it is denominated υ(πομονη&, (*hupomone*), that is, *to continue* Rom 2:7, and *steadfastness* (Luke 8:15). In considering this matter, four things are to be noted: 1) in whom something is preserved, 2) what is preserved in them, 3) the cause and means whereby preservation occurs, and 4) its purpose.

*Believers are the Objects of Divine Preservation*

First, believers are the persons who are preserved; and it is in them that something is preserved. God maintains and preserves everything He has created. God also preserves good angels in their confirmed state—they being referred to as *the elect* (1 Tim 5:21). Our reference here is, however, to the preservation of the elect, the regenerate, the true believers—viewing them as being in the church militant upon earth and as being under assault by their enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh. Since the believer's renewal is but in part, he sins daily. These sins, strictly speaking, are worthy of reprobation, and believers, when left to themselves, do not have sufficient strength to preserve themselves, their faith, or their spiritual life. They would succumb to the assault of the enemy. Nevertheless, they are preserved, but by a strength which comes

from without. “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Pet 1:5); “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down” (Ps 37:24).

By this power spiritual life and faith, bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God in regeneration, are preserved. It can be that spiritual life is so besieged by opposition and becomes so weak, that for a season it only manifests itself by a looking on high, a sigh, an inclination toward God, or an affection for God. Yes, a believer can faint, so to speak, so that spiritual life does not manifest itself at all for a season. However, spiritual life in its essence that is, union with Christ, will remain. It will never disappear. “Whosoever is born of God ... his seed remaineth in him” (1 John 3:9).

The only cause of their steadfastness is the omnipotent and faithful God. That God is able to preserve spiritual life in them is a certainty for all. Of His willingness to preserve them, the Lord Jesus assures us: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39). That He will do so, is evident from the promises: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation” (Heb 6:17-18). Peter states that God in actuality does so: “Who are kept by the power of God” (1 Pet 1:5).

### *Means Employed by God for Preservation*

Just as the Lord works all things in the realm of nature by way of means, God likewise uses means in the work of grace. He also does so in preserving His saints. This is not to suggest that there is efficacy in the means or in the use of those means by believers. Rather, both the use of the means and the outcome of their use are dependent upon the Lord alone. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13); “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The means God uses for the preservation of His own are, among others:

(1) Instruction and direction by means of the Word: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps 119:9,105);

(2) Comforting and quickening promises: “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me. Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction” (Ps 119:50,92).

(3) Stirring exhortations: “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22); “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt 26:41).

(4) Admonishing reproofs: “Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13); “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3); “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13).

(5) The rod of chastisement: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (Ps 119:71); “... He (chastens us) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness ... afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:10-11).

(6) Sacramental sealing: “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4); “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16).

(7) The use of the keys of the kingdom when they grievously depart from the way. “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5).

The purpose for which believers are preserved is salvation itself. “Moreover whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified” (Rom 8:30); “Who are kept by the power of God ... unto salvation” (1 Pet 1:5). God’s ultimate objective is the manifestation of His goodness, longsuffering, faithfulness, immutability, wisdom, and power. “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thess 1:10).

From that which has been said it is evident that *the perseverance of the saints is a gracious and powerful operation of God whereby He preserves the spiritual life and faith in the truly converted in such a fashion that it can neither self-destruct, nor be extinguished or removed by their enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh. Instead, they will most certainly attain to eternal felicity.*

Just as other truths have always had and still have their opponents, also this doctrine, so full of comfort, has its opponents. Yes, all parties within the church which to a greater or lesser degree deviate from the truth—such as Papists, Socinians, Anabaptists, Arminians, and even Lutherans—are opposed in one way or the other to the perseverance of the saints.

*Question:* Can those who are truly regenerate and are true

believers apostatize as far as spiritual life and faith are concerned, and perish?

*Answer:* All other sects resolutely answer in the affirmative. The *Lutherans* confess that true believers can completely lose spiritual life and faith; however, God will restore them from this state of death and most certainly save them. They hold to a *full* apostasy, but not a *final* apostasy. The others hold to a *full and final* apostasy of the saints. We reject *both the full and final apostasy* of the saints, and confess that spiritual life in its essence, even though its manifestation may for a season be impeded to a greater or lesser degree, always remains in believers, and that they will most certainly be led to the state of felicity.

*Proof #1: The Saints' Perseverance Proven from Scripture*

We derive this proof from specific texts.

A. "Though he (the righteous or godly man) fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Ps 37:24). A godly man is here referred to as falling and sinning, as he still offends daily in many things. If he were to be cast away, it would have to be for the sake of his sins. The text says, however, that he will not be cast away for that reason. The reason is then added: It is not that he will restore himself and arise, but because the Lord sustains him and keeps him from falling. He will thus most certainly remain standing.

*Evasive Argument:* The text speaks of a falling due to temporal trials, and not of a falling into sin. Not to be cast down refers to a not perishing in these afflictions.

*Answer* (1) The godly generally have more afflictions than the ungodly, and they do indeed perish in them. "The righteous perisheth" (Isa 57:1). Thus, the promise, in the absolute sense of the word, cannot primarily be applicable to the temporal.

(2) If it were so that the godly would always be, and remain, blessed in a temporal sense, they would certainly also persevere in godliness. That which brings forth a positive effect thereby becomes more positive itself.

(3) And if the reference here is to a falling into wretched circumstances, then this is a powerful proof for perseverance, for the psalmist confirms what Paul writes: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation ...? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God" Rom 8:35,38-39.

(4) The psalmist speaks in this psalm of the exercise of godliness and that the Lord will bring forth their righteousness as the light

(vss. 3-6), while declaring in verse 24 that they are yet imperfect and do stumble and fall. Nevertheless, they will not be cast away, because the Lord upholds them.

B. “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24). This chapter makes reference to a twofold violence inflicted upon the elect: persecution and deception. However, it indicates the impossibility of the elect being drawn away and deceived, and thus their spiritual state is sure.

*Evasive Argument #1:* “Impossible” here implies “difficult” (cf. Matt 19:26; Matt 26:39; Acts 20:16; Rom 12:18).

*Answer:* “Impossible” never means “difficult”—also not in the quoted texts.

*Evasive Argument #2:* This text speaks of what false prophets are not able to do, but not what they themselves are able to do.

*Answer* (1) Believers are then most certainly set free from all external influences. All this then cannot have as its result, that with their intellect, will, and in very deed they would relinquish Christ, the faith, and godliness—and thus that they would apostatize from all these. It is natural for man’s desires to have an object which is external to them, and it is this object which sets desires in motion. Since there is then nothing from without which can set the desires of believers in motion and cause them to fall out of grace, they are thus in a state which is certain and sure.

(2) The text says that eternal election is the foundation of their spiritual state, making it impossible for them to be deceived unto apostasy. It is therefore an impossibility from every perspective—for others as well as for themselves.

*Evasive Argument #3:* Christ speaks of the work of false prophets and what their objective would be—not concerning the outcome; that is, whether or not the elect will be deceived thereby. Thus, the issue of certainty or uncertainty is not discussed here.

*Answer:* This flatly contradicts the text. It speaks of the result of this deception in respect to the elect, stating that their apostasy is impossible. It is therefore also recorded as a parenthetical argument.

*Evasive Argument #4:* This text speaks of some eminent Christians, and not of all Christians.

*Answer* (1) The text makes no exception, but speaks of the elect, which includes them all.

(2) There are thus some who cannot be deceived.

(3) It is not the strength or weakness of believers which is here defined as the foundation for this certainty, but rather election.

*Evasive Argument #5:* The elect can be deceived prior to their conversion, and thus also after their conversion.

*Answer:* No one is deceived prior to conversion, for one is then in sin, proceeding from sin to sin as others do. Then there is nothing good within him which needs to be preserved. After conversion believers have both spirit and life, however, and preservation is predicated upon that life—and that life will not be able to be removed.

*Evasive Argument #6:* The elect cannot be deceived; that is, upon condition that they perform their duty and persevere in faith and godliness.

*Answer (1)* No condition is mentioned here. The promise pertains to being preserved in faith itself.

(2) That is as much as to say: They cannot be deceived when they are not deceived, and they will persevere in faith, hope, and love when they persevere. Likewise, a man will not die when he does not die. This is nonsense.

C. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” Rom 8:35,38-39. This text speaks of the elect, stating that neither a creature, nor any event precipitated by them, will be able to remove the love which they have toward Christ and God, and which God and Christ have toward them.

*Evasive Argument #7:* Paul speaks of tribulations and not of sin. He does not say that sins are not able to separate believers from the love God has toward them and make them subject to the hatred of God. Rather, it states that tribulations are not capable of doing this.

*Answer (1)* Paul states that all tribulations are not able to take away the love they have toward God; that is, they cannot lead them to apostasy. That the apostle is speaking of the love of believers toward God is evident from the fact that these tribulations are against the godly which could cause them to succumb in faith, hope, and love, and thus separate them from God. These tribulations do not pertain to God Himself, and thus the thought cannot be entertained here that God would thereby change in His love toward them. The apostle says in verse 37 that believers in all their tribulations will be more than conquerors; thus there is not even a remote possibility that tribulations would separate them from their love toward Christ. The apostle therefore refers here to sins,

declaring that all tribulations cannot cause believers to sin unto death—which a forsaking of the love of God would be.

(2) If one understands the love of God here to refer to the love He has for His elect, and if it is here stated that no tribulations can remove the love of God toward His elect and change it into hatred, then this could only occur if, by reason of these tribulations, they would fall into sin, for there is nothing that removes God’s love except sin. Since God’s love for His elect cannot be removed, however, tribulations cannot bring believers to such a condition and to such a sin.

(3) No matter how one may view the love of God, the text says that this love remains immutable, and that all that is in heaven and earth cannot change that love.

D. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). The apostle wrote to the congregation (where the wicked are always intermingled with the upright) to warn the members that they are not to deceive themselves by imagining that they will be saved anyway, even if they yield to sin. Instead, the truly regenerate neither sin nor can sin, for the seed of God is in them and will remain in them, and they are born of God. Thus, they who are born of God are in a state which is both certain and immutable in respect to the spiritual life which is in them and remains in them. This does not mean that they neither offend nor are able to offend, for the apostles confirm this to be so (cf. 1 John 1:8; James 3:2). Rather, “to sin” here refers to “living in sin,” that is, to find delight in and to relish sin. This is true for the ungodly, concerning whom he says in verse 8, “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” This refers to being under the dominion of sin, and such cannot be true for a regenerate person. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Thus, the apostle strongly argues here for the perseverance of believers when he says that 1) the believer “doth not commit sin,” 2) “his seed remaineth in him,” 3) “he cannot sin,” and 4) he cannot sin “because he is born of God.” The papists, Arminians, and Lutherans each have a different response to this.

*Evasive Argument #1: The Papists* respond to this, saying that those who are born of God cannot sin insofar as they are born of God, but that they can yet fully and completely fall into sin when they neglect and do not preserve the seed of God which is in them.

*Answer:* If one understands the words “insofar as they are born of God” to refer to the regenerate part of the believer, then this evasive argument is not against us, but rather in our favor, for

no sin can proceed from the regenerate man. If one understands “insofar as” to refer to a condition—namely, if they persevere—then this is contrary to the text and contradicts the matter itself. It is contrary to the text, for there is not the least indication of a condition. It is not stated here: “They cannot sin if they retain the seed of God and if they continue to be born of God.” Instead, it is written: “... because the seed of God remains in them and because they are born of God.” Here we have an absolute proposition: They do not sin and they cannot sin. This proposition is confirmed by arguments which are both absolute and established: *for* the seed of God remains in him, *for* he is born of God. It is also self-contradictory, for it is nonsense to say that he cannot sin if he does not sin.

*Evasive Argument #2:* The *Arminians* claim that this text only intends to say that to sin is contrary to the inclination and habit of the truly regenerate; they have an aversion for sin. The phrase “to be born of God” does not refer to a characteristic of true believers which would prevent them from sinning, but is identical to what is expressed in the words “not to commit sin,” that is, to be conformed to God in their life. Furthermore, the remaining of God’s seed in them is as much as to say that the seed of God is in them. Thus, the meaning of the text comes down to this: The propensity of grace cannot coexist with the propensity of sin, and when the propensity of sin prevails, the propensity of grace will be lost. It is therefore not the apostle’s intent to say that believers cannot apostatize, for he says in Rom 6:14 that believers can also come under the dominion of sin and apostatize.

*Answer* (1) All these misinterpretations are obviously contrary to the text, and therefore we reject them as quickly as they are uttered. The apostle does not speak of an *inclination*, but rather of deeds—of sin. He does not say that sin is contrary to their inclination and that they have an aversion for it, but that they neither sin nor are able to sin. This is not due to their aversion for it (which is a fact), but because the seed of God remains in them, they having been born of God.

(2) To be born of God expressly refers to a characteristic which has been brought forth in man by way of regeneration, for thereby he becomes a new creature 2 Cor 5:17, and thereby he becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

(3) The verb “to remain” expresses more than simply “to be.” It expresses a being steadfast and durable—something that neither departs nor is removed, and something that endures to the end. A small child knows this to be so. It is to be observed in the following passages: “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and

it abode upon Him” (John 1:32); “Abide in Me, and I in you ... continue ye in My love” John 15:4,9.

(4) The apostle does not only say that the propensity of reigning sin cannot coexist with the propensity of grace, but says that wherever the seed of God (the propensity of grace)—the new creature, being partaker of the divine nature—is present, the propensity of sin cannot exist there, and thus he cannot sin.

(5) We deny strongly that true believers can become subject to reigning sins. The passage, “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” 1 John 3:14, is no proof for this. The reference here is to the unconverted, and they are thereby distinguished from the truly converted who love the brethren. They who do not love the brethren are said to abide in death, and thus they had never been brought to life. We do indeed admit that true believers can fall into great sin; however, sin does not have dominion over them. There is and remains a warfare, and even if the regenerated man has been subdued for a season, he nevertheless renders no obedience to it as his lord. He will always reemerge and the seed of God will remain.

*Evasive Argument #3:* The *Lutherans* hold to *full* apostasy, but not to *final* apostasy. They say about this text that the believer’s inability to sin means that he can neither yield to ungodliness nor find delight in living in sin *to the extent and for the duration that the seed of God is in him*. They say that the word “for” is not suggestive of the reason why he cannot sin, but is merely indicative of a restatement; it means “as much as and as long as the seed of God remains in him and he is born of God.”

*Answer* (1) We admit that a regenerate person does not sin in the manner mentioned; that is, insofar as the seed of God is in him and he is born of God. For sin does not proceed from the spirit, but from the flesh (cf. Rom 7). It is also true that he does not sin as long as the seed of God remains in him and he is born of God. The apostle says, however, that the seed of God remains in him, will not spontaneously expire, and will never be removed from him. Thus, a regenerate person will never live under the dominion of sin.

(2) It is nonsense to maintain that he will not sin to the extent that the seed of God remains in him, and then quietly conclude from this that when it dissipates, he will sin. This would be as much as saying, “Fire heats insofar as it does not chill.”

(3) The word “for” does not mean “and,” but points to the cause why a regenerate person neither sins nor can sin. It thus remains an immovable truth that the regenerate cannot apostatize.

*Proof #2: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Immutability of Eternal Election*

This proof we derive from the immutability of eternal election. This decree of the only wise and omnipotent God is immutable: "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Rom 9:11); "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel ..." (Heb 6:17); "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim 2:19). Therefore the apostle connects glorification to eternal election with an unbreakable tie: "Moreover whom He did predestinate ... them He also glorified" (Rom 8:30). God neither will nor can change this decree due to His immutability. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6); "... the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Man will not be able to annul God's counsel. He has not been chosen on the basis of any condition, but unconditionally—in the absolute sense of the word. The Lord will save him in a way in which He himself will lead him. No creature will be able to annihilate this decree. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isa 14:27). Since God wills and shall give salvation to His elect by an immutable, eternal decree, and will make them partakers of salvation in the way of faith and repentance, then those who have been called according to His purpose can neither become apostates as far as spiritual life and faith are concerned, nor perish. (Cf. chapter 6, vol. #1, p. 211.)

*Proof #3: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of Christ's Satisfaction, Intercession, and Preservation*

This proof we derive from the efficacy of Christ's satisfaction, intercession, and preservation.

(1) *The satisfaction* of Christ is perfect both in regard to original and actual sins—all sins which are committed until the day of one's death. This is true for all His elect, and for them alone; it is not for others. There is absolutely no condition whereby it would be contingent upon man. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). By His satisfaction God is reconciled with His elect. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom 5:10). They are perfect in Christ Col 2:10, and the "righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). This is of eternal duration: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14; cf. chapter 22).

(2) *The intercession* of Christ is efficacious and cannot be resisted, since it occurs by the efficacy of His satisfaction. "We have an

advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1). Therefore He said, “I knew that Thou hearest Me always” (John 11:42). The Father promises to give what He demands: “Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance” (Ps 2:8). However, Christ demands preservation and salvation for His elect: “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. ... Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:11,24); “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Since Christ prays for their preservation and salvation, and He is always heard, they cannot apostatize.

(3) *Preservation* by Christ is a certainty. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29). They who hear Christ’s voice and follow Him are His sheep. Hearing and following come naturally to sheep. Those sheep the Lord Jesus knows, He grants them eternal life, and they will not perish. No one either will or is able to pluck them out of the hands of Christ and the Father. Their spiritual state is thus certain and well-preserved, and they cannot fall away. It cannot be stated more clearly than this.

*Evasive Argument:* They will be preserved as long as they remain sheep.

*Answer* (1) Christ says that they will remain sheep. Those who once are sheep; that is, those to whom He grants eternal life and who will not perish, will remain sheep.

(2) Christ says that no one—whoever he may be—and therefore also they themselves will not be able to pluck them out of His hand. There is no condition here: If someone has become a sheep, his preservation is certain.

(3) Christ is the good Shepherd. He is not a good shepherd who only protects his sheep against the wolf and the thief, but does not protect his sheep when they of their own accord would wander away from the flock and go astray. Therefore, the faithful Shepherd Jesus will keep His sheep from all evil, for to that end—that He would keep them and give them eternal life—they have been given to Him by the Father: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39).

Consider all this together. Those for whom Christ has made full satisfaction, for whom He prays that they may be kept and may have eternal life, and whom He Himself powerfully preserves—they cannot lose spiritual and eternal life, apostatize, or perish.

*Proof #4: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Abiding Operation of the Holy Spirit*

This proof is derived from the operation of the Holy Spirit in believers.

(1) The Holy Spirit abides with them eternally. “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

(2) The Holy Spirit is the earnest of their salvation. “... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph 1:13-14); “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).

(3) All the operations of the Holy Spirit in them are of a permanent nature. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29).

*Evasive Argument:* This text refers to the conversion of the Jews.

*Answer:* This text refers to eternal felicity by virtue of the election of grace Rom 11:5, upon the manifestation of mercy (vs. 32). He is speaking of the gifts of grace which were bestowed upon the elect Jews. Whatever is permanent for the elect Jews is permanent for all the elect.

From that which has been said we conclude the following: He in whom the Holy Spirit resides eternally, for whom the Holy Spirit is an earnest of eternal felicity, who has been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, and in whom the operations of the Holy Spirit are of an irrevocable and permanent nature, cannot apostatize, but will most certainly be saved. All this is most certainly true for believers, and thus they will most certainly be saved.

*Proof #5: The Saints Persevere by Virtue of the Immutability of the Covenant of Grace*

This proof we derive from the immutability of the covenant.

First, this is evident from the following passage: “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed” (Isa 54:10).

*Evasive Argument:* This text pertains to the immutability of the covenant from God’s side; God from His side will not break it. It

does not follow from this, however, that believers will not break it from their side.

*Answer* (1) It is a covenant of grace in which God has promised to give and do all that was to be accomplished for His children. Thus, in regard to man, this promise is not conditional: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:26-27). It is therefore sufficient that the covenant is immutable from the side of God. It is therefore entirely immutable, for the Lord Himself will cause them to walk upon the way in which He leads His own unto salvation.

(2) The covenant of grace is as steadfast as the covenant with Noah (Isa 54:9). This latter covenant cannot be changed by either man, sin, human will, or human might. Likewise, the covenant of grace cannot be changed, for it is said to be as steadfast as the covenant of Noah.

Secondly, the immutability of this covenant is also evident in the following texts: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer 31:33); “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40). This covenant neither can nor will be broken. This is true from God’s side, for He, who is the faithful One, promises this, and it is a purely gracious covenant which was not established upon any conditions. Man will also not break it, for the Lord has promised that He will prevent them from doing so, and cause them to do according to His will—even though their conduct is not a condition. This covenant is not in force for some days or years; it is an eternal covenant, and therefore it will remain steadfast.

*Evasive Argument #1:* These texts relate to the restoration of the Jews in Canaan but not to eternal felicity.

*Answer* (1) Jer 31:33 very clearly refers to the days of the New Testament, as is evident from (Heb 8:8).

(2) Even though Jer 32:40 also pertains to the restoration of the church in Canaan, it nevertheless primarily relates to the spiritual and eternal benefits of the covenant of grace. Out of this issued forth the restoration of Canaan, since the Surety of the covenant had to be born in Canaan. There is but one covenant: the

covenant of grace. To this, temporal blessings are appended as a means and way to bring the elect to the promised salvation.

*Evasive Argument #2:* This promise was given to the entire Jewish nation. Since it is known that they are not all saved, it cannot be a promise concerning perseverance.

*Answer* (1) All Jews were never restored to Canaan. By reason of the same argumentation we would then also be permitted to say that this promise does not pertain to the Jewish nation. This is absurd, however, as is the evasive argument itself.

(2) There is an express reference here to the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace: to have God as a God, to have the fear of God, not to depart from the Lord, and to have the law of the Lord written in the heart. Repeated mention is thus made of the benefits of the covenant and of their perseverance in it.

(3) When God makes promises to His church, these promises do not pertain to persons who merely “run along,” but to true believers alone, who constitute the church. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom 9:6-8). Even if it is true that all Jews will not be saved, God’s covenant with His church will nevertheless abide—whether it consists of Jews or Gentiles. It is one church which is steadfast and indestructible.

*Evasive Argument #3:* Here something is promised which had no prior existence. It can therefore not refer in any way to the perseverance of saints, since in our opinion perseverance has been part and parcel of believers from the very beginning.

*Answer* (1) This immutable covenant is in essence the same from the beginning unto the end of the world. There is, however, a difference in administration, and in that respect it is called new.

(2) God frequently promises the fulfillment of promises at a future date which he already had fulfilled in believers at an earlier date in order to further assure believers of a later date that He would also fulfill these promises for them. The repetition of promises is not a denial of promises made previously. It thus is and remains an immovable truth that believers cannot apostatize.

*Objection #1:* “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while” (Matt 13:21). It is thus evident that believers can apostatize.

*Answer* (1) All that is denominated as faith is not saving faith. Otherwise Agrippa would also have been a believer, for he believed the Holy Scriptures (Acts 26:27). Likewise, these temporal believers also had historical faith accompanied by a confession, but

they did not have true saving faith. This is clearly to be observed in the contrasts made between true believers (the good earth) and the beaten path, as well as between the earth beneath the thorns and the good earth.

(2) Their heart was not right, they being represented by the stony ground. This heart of stone is removed from believers (Ezek 36:26).

(3) They were without root, whereas true believers are rooted in Christ (Col 2:7).

(4) They bore no fruits, and thus their faith was a dead faith James 2:17, for believers bear manifold fruit Matt 13:23, and their faith worketh by love (Gal 5:6).

*Objection #2:* “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: ... If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered” (John 15:2,6). Here mention is made of branches which are in Christ, branches which due to their fruitlessness and not abiding in Christ, are cast out. True believers can therefore apostatize.

*Answer* (1) The congregation is the Lord’s vineyard Isa 5. Many unconverted join the church and thus appear to be incorporated into Christ. We readily admit that such can fall out of this state and that they will be cast out. However, this does not relate to our point of contention.

(2) Those who are here said to be cast out were never true believers, for they bore no fruit and therefore their faith was dead.

(3) This is a parable and we must not make all details applicable at will. Rather, our focus must only be on the objective, and the objective is very clear. It is an exhortation to believers to be fruitful, and a warning to everyone not to be satisfied with only the external relationship to the church and a mere confession of Christ. For all who bear no fruit will be eliminated—here from the church, and hereafter from heaven.

(4) It does not say that such persons were ever truly in Christ; rather, it speaks of those *who are in Him but bear no fruit*, as is true for all the unconverted who never bear fruit in Christ and who never have been in Christ. *The fact that they do not abide in Him* is proof that they have never been in Him and have never been true believers. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us” (1 John 2:19).

*Objection #3:* “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (1 Tim 1:19). It is thus evident that they who have faith and a good conscience can lose them and in that respect can become apostate.

*Answer:* The apostle exhorts Timothy to remain steadfast and to adhere to the true doctrine of faith and of a good conscience. True doctrine is here referred to as faith, which is frequently the case. This is to be observed in the following passages: “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim 4:1); “Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” Jude 3; “Who ... overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim 2:18). Many others—also Hymenaeus and Alexander—had this faith, this true doctrine of faith, in common with Timothy. However, they did not have that true saving faith in Christ unto justification and sanctification which Timothy possessed. Otherwise they would have persevered in it (1 John 2:19). Timothy had a good conscience which had been cleansed in the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14). Such a good conscience they did not have, even though they could have had a natural sincerity, conducting themselves according to their conscience without hypocrisy—as was true of Paul prior to his conversion (Acts 23:1). Such a faith and such a good conscience the unconverted can readily cast away, reject, and let go if it happens to be in their interest. Furthermore, relative to themselves they are capable of spurning true saving faith and a good conscience by the blood and Spirit of Christ, so that they do not become partakers of them—just as the Jews rejected the gospel (Acts 13:46). Paul delivered those who had fallen away from the doctrine of faith and from having an upright conscience to Satan as a means to their conversion—as he did with the incestuous person (1 Cor 5:5). It is thus evident that we do not have a shred of evidence here for the apostasy of the saints.

*Objection #4:* “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb 6:4-6). All these things are applicable to none other but truly converted people and true believers. Such are able to apostatize and crucify the Son of God afresh. It will then be impossible for them to come again to repentance.

*Answer* (1) Paul uses conditional language here: “... if ...” A condition does not establish anything as a fact, however, nor does it suggest that it will be thus and can transpire as such. Paul speaks in this fashion: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto

you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). Such conditional propositions are but urgent warnings and exhortations to refrain from sin.

(2) It is very evident that Paul is speaking of such who have never been converted and who in their heart were without virtue. For as he continues to speak of such, he says, “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” Apostates are like soil which is not good and brings forth thorns and thistles. Our point of contention does not relate to them and thus this text is not contrary to our view.

(3) All those things mentioned are no marks of true regeneration and faith. They can very well be, and frequently are, present in the unconverted. An unconverted person can be illuminated to the extent that he understands the truths of the gospel. Balaam said, “He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty ... having his eyes open” (Num 24:4). He whose eyes have been enlightened can taste of the heavenly gift (Heb 6:4). Paul recounts such gifts in 1 Cor 12. The unconverted can also find delight in tasting such gifts. To receive revelations concerning future things, wisdom, gifts to heal the sick, and the ability to speak, understand, and interpret various languages are delightful things, even for the flesh. These gifts are *heavenly* and are sent from heaven by the Holy Spirit, for “all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit” (1 Cor 12:11). In this respect also the unconverted become partakers of the Holy Spirit. The unconverted also taste at times “the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” All knowledge of matters of which one had no prior knowledge is delightful. This is particularly true if one may be acquainted with the glorious state of the children of God, the benefits of the covenant of grace, redemption in Christ, the standing at the right hand of Christ in the last judgment, and being taken into eternal glory. To taste these blessings by way of reflection is to have delight and sweetness in them. This is true for many unconverted persons. Temporal believers received the Word with joy Luke 8:13, and Herod heard John gladly (Mark 6:20). Thus, all these matters can very well be known by unconverted persons—and frequently are. It is an entirely different matter to be a partaker of the Holy Spirit unto regeneration, faith, hope, and love; and to be assured of being a partaker of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, and to rejoice and delight in the hope of glory,

of which some believers do have some foretaste. This was, however, not the portion of those of whom the apostle speaks here.

(4) The words “to renew them again unto repentance” do not imply that they were ever truly converted. Rather, they imply that it is impossible to lead such to true repentance because they have been hardened. Furthermore, God generally withholds His grace from such, for otherwise it would not be impossible with God. “To renew” does not imply that something will be restored to its former condition; that is, to bring something which is old and dilapidated into a better condition. Rather it implies to bring something into a condition which is superior to its previous condition. Such is the meaning in the following passages: “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2); “He saved us by ... renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). The word “again” also does not imply that something will be restored to its previous condition, but implies a change to a condition in which it previously was not. The same word *παλιν* (*palin*) is used for the initial translation of a person from spiritual death to spiritual life—regeneration. This is to be observed in the following passages: “He saved us, by the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5); “... that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration” (Matt 19:28).

(5) If one insists that “to renew again to repentance” means restoration into the previous state, then it means restoration into the state of a temporal believer. For repentance is not always indicative of regeneration, but can also signify only an external change. “The men of Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonas” (Matt 12:41).

*Objection #5:* “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:29). Such as have been sanctified by the blood of Christ do tread under foot the Son of God and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.

*Answer* (1) Paul speaks conditionally, from which nothing else can be concluded but that it is an exhortation.

(2) If one determines that such indeed occurs, then the entire strength of the argument appears to be in the words “to be sanctified by the blood of Christ,” as if “to sanctify” only signifies true sanctification by the Holy Spirit, since it also signifies separation unto holy usage, and an external sanctification by an external entrance into the covenant. “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a

special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut 7:6); “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy” (1 Cor 7:14). Before one can conclude from Heb 10:29 that there is an apostasy of the saints, it must first be proven that the word “sanctified” here signifies true sanctification only, that is, the renewal of God’s image in man. This simply cannot be done. Rather, it is evident that here it must be understood as referring to external sanctification, for the saints cannot apostatize.

*Additional Objection:* To be sanctified by Christ’s blood is true sanctification.

*Answer:* We deny this. By His blood Christ has received the right and the authority to use all creatures and all men—both good and evil—according to His will, to the glory of God, and to the benefit of the elect. By His blood He has been authorized to be the Judge of heaven and earth John 5:27, and to damn the ungodly in judgment. Since He has been obedient to the Father, even unto the death of the cross, all knees must bow before Him (Phil 2:8-10). It is for this reason that all power has been given Him in heaven and upon earth (Matt 28:18). Thereby He has also received power to bestow many external blessings upon the non-elect: to heal their bodily diseases, to proclaim the gospel to their soul as prophet, to call and bring them externally into His church, and thus to externally sanctify and separate them from others. Thus, to be sanctified by Christ’s blood neither signifies true conversion, growth in grace, nor the possession and manifestation of the image of God. Rather, it signifies *a being brought into the church externally*, and to have escaped the pollution of the world and gross sins through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. That such can apostatize is a matter beyond controversy.

*Objection #6:* “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1). To be bought by Christ is to be delivered by Christ’s blood from guilt and punishment and to be His property (Rev 5:9). Such persons can, however, apostatize and go lost.

*Answer* (1) Such persons have never been true believers, for they were false teachers who subtly introduced damnable heresies. Therefore this text does not relate to this controversy.

(2) Christ purchases His own unto salvation, and purchases others to be used for His purposes. This we have demonstrated

relative to Heb 10 in the fifth objection. One purchases vessels both to honor and to dishonor. These false teachers who pretended to be partakers of the merits of Christ were bought in order to be ministers, but not unto salvation. There can be various reasons for purchasing something.

*Objection #7:* Many examples of apostatizing can be produced to counter the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, such as the angels who have become devils, as well as *Adam*. If they have apostatized, then the godly can also apostatize.

*Answer* (1) We are not discussing here what could happen potentially to the godly as they are in and of themselves, and if left over to themselves, but what cannot happen, since they are kept by the power of God.

(2) The angels and Adam had no promises relative to preservation; however, the godly have promises that are sure.

*Additional Objection:* *David* fell into such sins which are not compatible with the preservation of faith and spiritual life, such as adultery and premeditated murder.

*Answer* (1) His repentance, restoration, and perseverance are clearly documented in Ps 51—as well as in the description of the end of his life.

(2) Even though faith and spiritual life are in a state of lethargy when such gross sins are committed, the seed of God nevertheless abides in believers.

*Additional Objection:* *Solomon* fell into idolatry at the end of his life.

*Answer* (1) Solomon was called *Jedidiah*, the beloved of the Lord. However, the love of God does not change (Jer 31:3; John 13:1).

(2) It has not been recorded to what extent Solomon fell into idolatry. It could be that it was only a yielding to the insistence of his idolatrous wives or that it was but an external act of worship, for he is not listed among the ungodly kings, but among those whose hearts were not perfect before the Lord as the heart of David (1 Kings 11:4). Thus he did not depart from the Lord.

(3) Subsequent to his death he, along with his father David, is recognized as an example for others. “For three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon” (2 Chron 11:17). It is thus evident that he died as a godly man.

(4) Everything has not been recorded, and one is thus not to conclude that he persevered in sin simply because no express mention is made of his repentance.

*Additional Objection:* *Peter* denied Christ thrice, and the denial of Christ cannot coexist with grace.

*Answer:* The Lord Jesus told him expressly that Satan would sift

him, but that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Furthermore, he quickly arose from his sudden fall, went outside, and “wept bitterly” (Matt 26:75). A believer is indeed capable of committing an act of outward denial.

*Additional Objection:* Judas was an apostle and he became a traitor. Furthermore, Christ said in John 17:12 that He had kept all the apostles, except Judas. Thus, one of those whom the Father had given to Christ did perish.

*Answer:* Judas was never given by the Father to Christ in order to be redeemed by Him, for he was not one of the elect. “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18). Prior to becoming a traitor he already was a *devil* John 6:70, and a *thief* (John 12:6). He had never been converted. In John 17:12 Judas is excluded from the number given by the Father unto salvation, and those who had been given are contrasted with Judas; Jesus preserved those who had been given to Him. Only Judas, being the son of perdition, did perish. Those who had been given to Jesus did not perish; however, Judas did. Judas’ only purpose for being among the apostles was that God’s decree might be executed.

*Additional Objection:* Demas left Paul and by renewal loved the present world (2 Tim 4:10). They who love the world, however, do not have the love of the Father in them (1 John 2:15).

*Answer:* It must first be proven that Demas had indeed been regenerated; there is no evidence of this in the Word of God. The fact that he joined Paul is no evidence of conversion, for many who followed Christ departed from Him (John 6:66).

*Alexander and Hymenaeus* departed from the true doctrine of faith. They have been discussed previously.

*Additional Objection:* The incestuous person was a believer, which is evident from his repentance (2 Cor 2:7). He had fallen so deeply that he had been delivered up to Satan (1 Cor 5:5). A believer can thus fall away completely.

*Answer* (1) There is no evidence that he was a believer prior to his offense. This would have to be proven first.

(2) By reason of illumination and remorse of conscience someone can be overwhelmed with sorrow, upon which an excommunicated offender may be readmitted by the church.

(3) Excommunication could have been a means unto his true conversion.

(4) If he had been truly converted prior to that, the seed of God would have nevertheless remained in him. One cannot conclude total apostasy from the falling into one sin. To fall into one sin

does not presuppose being under the dominion of sin. Excommunication brought him to repentance and caused him to forsake sin.

### *Comforts of this Doctrine*

Having confirmed the truth regarding the perseverance of the saints, we shall now discuss the efficacy of this doctrine as far as comforting and stirring believers up in the way of sanctification.

It is this doctrine which underscores all comforts which believers derive from the other doctrines of the faith. For what comfort can be found in the fact that one is regenerated, has been adopted as a child of God, and has received the forgiveness of sin, if he knows that tomorrow he may be a child of the devil and of hell again? If, however, along with the reception of grace, one is assured that he shall be kept by the power of God, that the covenant is immutable, and that he shall most certainly become a partaker of eternal felicity—only then will grace truly yield him joy, will he be quickened in love, and can he forget what is behind him and reach forth to that which is before him, pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God” (Phil 3:14). Believers have many grievous and sinful encounters in this world; however, if this doctrine of perseverance is understood well, and is both believed and practiced, it will yield encouragement in the midst of all this. It is a serious deficiency in the godly to be so inclined to focus upon themselves, desiring to derive all their comfort from the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and to have such an excessive desire for them. If they then are deprived of this (for it is not God’s way always to give them the sensible enjoyment of this), they are discouraged. This is the reason why the godly are often so melancholy. Instead, they would run their course with joy if they would focus more upon the immutability of God, the covenant, and the promises. Their life would be more to the honor of God and to the edification of their neighbor. Therefore, train yourself to be fully assured of this doctrine and to use it continually to your comfort. Then the efficacy unto sanctification will immediately issue forth from it.

Here there is a remedy against *spiritual desertions*. Believers do not always have the privilege to be on the holy mountain with the disciples, to be in the third heaven with Paul, and always to live in the enjoyment of the embraces and kisses of the Lord Jesus. Rather, the Lord frequently hides His lovely countenance from them, stands afar, covers Himself with a cloud so that not a single prayer can penetrate, remains silent as if He were not concerned about them, withholds the motions of His mercy toward them, brings thick darkness upon them, seemingly casts them away, and

appears to be wrathful toward them. This doctrine is, however, the foundation of your comfort, true believers, for God's love toward you is immutable, and His calling and gifts are irreversible. Therefore, exercise faith, and consider the Lord to be to you who He was when He visited you in the very sweetest manner—yes, infinitely more. He will most certainly return to you, for He says: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee” (Isa 54:7-8); “But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands” (Isa 49:14-16); “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6).

Here there is a remedy for *the assaults of Satan*. The Lord has established an irreconcilable enmity between the seed of the woman—Christ, and all His members—and the seed of the devil, the ungodly. As soon as God's children are set free from the snares of the devil and are translated into the kingdom of Christ, so soon the devil will persecute them. One time he will use subtle delusion to entice them to sin; then again he will use fiery darts to frighten them; and then again he will buffet them in order to injure and prevent them from having peace. These assaults are capable of tossing a believer to and fro, causing his faith to totter. However, in spite of all the violence of this evil, powerful, and subtle enemy, the devil will not succeed in causing the apostasy of a single one, not even of the most tender sheep; nor will he succeed in plucking him out of the hand of Jesus. Instead, the devil himself will be trodden under foot by believers. “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). Therefore, by the truth and in the might of God, they may triumph over the devil. “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Rev 12:10-11).

Here is a remedy against *the enmity of the world*. Since God's children have forsaken the world, and convince it of sin by their light and conduct, the world consequently hates them and endeavors to draw them away from their faith and godly walk. It will do so either by caressing them with the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; by threatening to take away all that

could comfort them; or by way of cruel persecution and death. This causes a believer to be concerned whether he will remain steadfast in times of trial. Believers, do not fear, however, for also the world will not be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord Rom 8:38-39—neither by her caresses, nor by her persecutions. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33); “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Therefore, we may “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:3-5). Be therefore also of good courage in this battle, and triumphantly exclaim with the apostle: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” Rom 8:35,37.

Here there is also a *remedy against sin*. A believer is only regenerate in part. The old Adam still resides within him and he retains his nature and desires. These desires war against the soul and cause her to stumble and fall frequently—yes, they may even keep her captive to sin. Not only does this grieve her, but it also begets many doubts and troubling thoughts within her as to whether she will be deceived in the end, as sanctification cannot be separated from justification. Since faith without works is dead, she therefore wonders whether she has fallen from grace. However, this is not so, believers! If you still battle sin (even if you have but little strength), are time and again restored and renew the battle, pray against sin, and flee to the Lord Jesus for strength—then be of good courage. Also your sins, which remain in you contrary to your wishes, will neither pluck you out of the hand of Christ, nor will He cast you away because of them. He knew ahead of time—before He called, converted, and comforted you—who you were and what you would do, and He took hold of you out of sovereign grace and said, “I desire to love you and I shall love you to the end.” “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand” (Ps 37:24); “If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord” (Jer 31:37).

Here is a *remedy against the weakness of faith, darkness, and all negative frames of the soul*. Sometimes the faith of God’s children

comes under assault from every angle, being assaulted by the devil, spiritual desertions, bodily crosses, sin, and darkness. Then they will not only be at a loss as to what to think of themselves, but they will wonder whether there are any true exercises of faith in them, for in this wretched darkness they can neither find Jesus nor engage in transactions with Him. This engenders despondency, listlessness, and deadness in them, so that it appears as if they give up. Nevertheless, the Lord preserves faith in their heart and causes it to resurface time and again. It will then be to their comfort that the Lord Jesus prays for them that their faith fail not Luke 22:32, and that they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” 1 Pet 1:5—just as experience has frequently taught them that this is so. Therefore, be encouraged, even while in that condition, to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim 1:12).

Here is a remedy against *the fear of death*. Death is contrary to nature and is the king of terrors. Even when a believer is reasonably well spiritually, if he begins to focus upon death, he will find fear and trembling within himself. Sometimes this will be in anticipation of physical death, and sometimes he will begin to realize how great the distinction is between felicity and damnation. When he then considers how feeble he is, he will think, “Where is my faith; does it have any root and validity? Where is my sanctification? I could yet be deceived at last!” Thus, the terror of death will arise in him. However, also in this we have a steadfast comfort in the certainty of God’s preservation, who not only preserves His own in the state of grace in this life, but also in the hour of death. “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:54-57).

As the perseverance of the saints yields a most powerful comfort, it is likewise a powerful motive for sanctification. Opposing parties, being neither acquainted with the nature of grace nor the possessors of grace, are of the opinion that this doctrine renders men careless. The contrary is true, however. There is nothing that moves man so sweetly and purely unto sanctification as grace and the permanency of this grace, for the love of God kindles the love of those whom He loves. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The steadfast hope and sure expectation of salvation is a powerful incentive unto holiness. “And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

The apostle therefore uses the mercy of God as the basis for his exhortation. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1).

(1) Therefore, acknowledge the certainty of your spiritual state and you will behold the sovereign grace, goodness, power, longsuffering, faithfulness, and immutability of God, who, till the day of their complete redemption, preserves the faith and spiritual life of a people who are so sinful and are surrounded and assaulted from every side. This will give you reason for adoration, to the praise and worship of the glorious perfections of God.

(2) Be encouraged in all perplexities; trust in the Lord who will also perfect that which concerneth you, will guide you with His counsel, and afterward receive you to glory.

(3) Be valiant in the battle, while trusting in God’s safe-keeping. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Forsake the world and all its counterfeit glory, for faith is of such a nature that it overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). Refrain from indulging in fleshly lusts which war against the soul, knowing that the outcome of your walk is not uncertain, and your struggle is not as a beating in the air. Therefore, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13); “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

Eschatology:

*The Doctrine of Last Things*



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## CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED

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### Concerning Death and the State of the Soul After Death

After God has led the elect in all the ways enumerated in the preceding, and they have fulfilled the Lord's counsel in their time, He then takes them to Himself into eternal felicity. However, this translation from time to eternity, from this sinful life to perfect holiness, from sorrow to joy, and from strife to the crown, takes place by way of the dark valley of the king of terrors, which is death. Only Enoch in the first, and Elijah in the second world have entered heaven without seeing death. With the exception of these two, however, no one will enter heaven except through this disagreeable way. Even though there is an incomprehensible difference between the final destiny of believers and the ungodly, they nevertheless have the experience of death in common. It is "the way of all the earth" (Josh 23:14); "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" (Ps 89:48). Regardless of whether one is a child, young man, or grown man, one must die. The end of everyone will be, "And he died." This is the certain and immutable injunction of God: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). This is the sentence: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:19). This is confirmed to all men by experience, so that there is no need for proof, but rather that it be brought to remembrance. Temporal advantages are of no avail here. Wise Solomon dies as well as foolish Nabal; the strong Samson as well as a tender woman, the beautiful Rachel; Dinah as well as tender-eyed Leah; and the rich man as well as poor Lazarus. A king is removed as suddenly from his throne as a beggar from

his hut. “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master” (Job 3:17-19).

Not only is it true that man must die, but between his birth and death there is but a small season. “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been” (Gen 47:9); “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1); “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow” (Ps 90:10). Man’s life is spent as a “tale that is told” vs. 9, and “we fly away” vs. 10. Our life is swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, which in one swift motion traverses the breadth of the loom (Job 7:9). Life is as grass and as a flower of the field, which endure but for a short season (Ps 103:15). It is but as a “handbreadth,” and a handbreadth of sun prior to sunset is but one hour (Ps 39:5). Life passes by swifter than a post, swifter than ships and an eagle that hasteth to the prey (Job 9:25-26). It is as a vapor James 4:14, and as smoke that arises as a straight pillar but readily disappears (Ps 102:4). It is as the tent of a shepherd which is removed quickly, and is cut off like the loom of a weaver which occurs in a moment (Isa 38:12).

### *The Death of Believers is Not a Punishment*

Even though dying is an experience common to all men, there is nevertheless a great difference between the death of the ungodly and of a believer. The ungodly face death as their prosecutor, and as a *punishment* upon sin. Death is the way whereby they are translated to eternal death. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Believers are also subject to death. It is only a *chastisement*, however, for the Lord Jesus has borne the punishment for all their sins and has delivered believers from them. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin” (Rom 8:10). Death is for them a passage to eternal life. “And it came to pass, that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22); “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” (Rev 14:13).

The following question needs to be addressed: *When it is not the cause of Christ which subjects believers to temporal misery and temporal death, are not these then punishments inflicted by God as an angry and righteous Judge?*

Someone has come to the foreground in our days who, while advocating other soul-damning and Socinian-like errors, also proposes

that the misery and temporal death of believers are punishments in the literal sense of the word. We maintain on the contrary that they are but paternal chastisements upon them. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, Christ is a *complete* Savior, and He has left believers with neither guilt nor punishment. Death is therefore not a punishment in the literal sense of the word. For if God were not entirely and fully reconciled with the elect, and were to punish believers as an angry and righteous Judge, then Christ would neither be a complete Savior nor would He have removed all guilt and punishment for believers. This sentiment is therefore a public denial that Christ is a complete Savior.

Secondly, if temporal misery and temporal death were punishments for believers in the literal sense of the word, then according to God's justice, the punishments should be commensurate to the sins. One of the following three possibilities must then be true: 1) all the sins of believers should not be subject to any temporal punishments beyond what they currently have to endure; 2) there must be some sins left for which Christ has not made satisfaction, which are thus not worthy of additional punishment in this life; or 3) there is a portion of the merited punishment which Christ has neither borne nor paid for, and therefore the believer himself must bear and pay for this. The disputants themselves must admit these three possibilities; however, none of these three are valid.

(1) Every sin and every partial sin is worthy of all temporal and eternal punishment to the utmost degree.

(2) Believers who have committed the largest number and most heinous sins would also have to be subject to the greatest measure of temporal punishment. However, experience frequently teaches the opposite. Moreover, there are no degrees when it comes to temporal death.

(3) Christ would then have paid more for the one than for the other, whereas the believer who has committed the least number of sins is occasionally subject to the severest temporal affliction. Since none of these three possibilities are valid, but are all absurd and contrary to God's Word, it is evident that temporal misery and temporal death are not punishments upon sin.

Thirdly, if any unrequited guilt were to be punished with temporal misery and death, the enduring of such punishment would yield this satisfaction, or it would be forgiven without total satisfaction. If the first is true, then man himself is able to make satisfaction for his sins; and if he is able to make satisfaction for some sins, one sin, or part of a sin, he should also be able to make satisfaction

for all that he deserves to suffer in this life simply by suffering more. If the latter is true, then there is no need for total satisfaction and Christ's suffering would have been unnecessary. For if one sin can be forgiven without total satisfaction, this must be true for all sins, as one sin makes us guilty of all (James 2:10). Both views are contrary to God's Word—the one is popish and the other Socinian.

Fourthly, *Enoch and Elijah*, who were also sinful men, did not die. They were thus delivered from what is said to be a literal punishment, of which they as well as others were deserving. If they were absolved of their punishment apart from satisfaction, absolution from all punishment can be granted apart from satisfaction and there would be no need for Christ. Or else Christ did endure the punishment of death for them, which He did not do for others.

Furthermore, consider the *martyrs*. They were deserving of death due to their sin, and yet the disputants will admit that their death was not a punishment for sin. However, in what manner are they then delivered from death as a punishment upon sin, of which they were worthy as well as other people? Does their martyrdom render satisfaction or have they been acquitted of their sins apart from satisfaction—or has Christ made satisfaction for them which exceeds what He has done for others? Also believers who will be living on the last day will not die, even though they are deserving of death. It is thus evident that this error undermines the necessity of Christ's satisfaction.

Fifthly, all afflictions which believers experience in this life come from God as their Father, who does so in love (Heb 12:10; Rev 3:19). They are thus not a punishment in the literal sense of the word.

Sixthly, Christ has also suffered physically and died a physical death. One of two things must be true: Either His suffering and death were in vain and are without efficacy, or He has thereby also removed temporal punishment. To hold to the first view is unchristian; the second is true. "With His stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5). By way of the forgiveness of sins He delivered from physical maladies. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matt 9:6). Consequently, physical maladies and death are no punishments in the literal sense of the word.

Seventhly, the bodies of believers are members of Christ 1 Cor 6:15,19-20. Thus, both their bodies and souls are delivered from punishment. Furthermore, how can the members of Christ still be subject to the righteous wrath of God and be subject to punishment in the literal sense of the word? This would be contradictory.

Eighthly, if the miseries of the body and death are punishments upon sin, then also anxieties of the soul are punishments upon sin, for in all physical affliction the soul suffers more than the body. Believers would then derive no benefit from Christ in this life, but only after death; then we ought not to put our hope in Christ in this life.

*Objection:* Since this error to a large extent agrees with the errors of the Papists (which were discussed in chapter 22, vol. #1, p. 575), the same objections which we refuted at that time will also be advanced here. It all boils down to the point that physical miseries are deemed to be punishments (cf. Job 6:4; Ps 88:17; Mic 7:9).

*Answer* (1) At least one text would have to be presented in which temporal death is designated a punishment. They have as yet not been able to find any text, however, and thus there is no proof for this aspect of the point of contention.

(2) The words *anger*, *wrath*, *vengeance*, and *punishment* have a twofold interpretation. Either they pertain to God as a righteous Judge or to God as a loving Father. A father can be outraged and angry, and will punish his children as much as a judge would mete out punishment for crimes. A child suffers as much as does a criminal when he is punished by a judge. Therefore, the same vocabulary is used in reference to both—among people as well as in Scripture. Thus, we must go beyond the sound of the word and not conclude one thing or the other simply on the basis of the word itself. Rather, we must determine from the textual context whether it signifies *punishment in the literal sense of the word or chastisement*.

(3) Physical miseries are referred to as either chastisements or rebukes: “O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure” (Ps 6:1); “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19); “If ye endure chastening ...” (Heb 12:7). It is thus evident that rebukes and chastisements are identical in regard to believers. Thus, the word “rebuke” does not provide any basis for this error, and thus the error is confirmed.

#### *Practical Use to be Made of the Reality That All Men Must Die*

We have shown above that all men must die. The certainty of this ought to motivate us to be engaged toward 1) the godly, 2) the unconverted, and 3) ourselves.

First, since both you and the godly must die, you are therefore to interact with the godly—to show them favors and to derive benefit from them.

(1) We must show favors to the godly, for they will not be with us long. If they are poor, give them alms, refresh them with food and drink, and clothe them, for it Christ is pleased when we are

beneficent to his members. If they die before you, then, upon your death, they will welcome you into the eternal tabernacles (Luke 16:9). If they are not in need of physical support, but instead are weak spiritually, comfort and support them, helping them to bear this. If they go astray, restore them in love, and exhort them. If they are in a good spiritual condition, gladden them with your love and friendship, and if they are slandered, defend them.

(2) We must seek to derive benefit from the godly while they are with us, for they will soon die. Pay close attention to their virtues and how they behave themselves under specific circumstances. Let them be an example to you in their humility, meekness, wisdom, dignity, friendliness, and other virtues as they shine forth. Pay attention to them continually, and as you observe them, seek to bring your soul into the same frame, seeking to emulate them. If they are ministers, or other experienced or gifted saints, make diligent use of their instructions and directions, so that you may thus become acquainted with God's dealings with His children, and receive light in difficulties and cases of conscience. Being foolish people, we do not realize that something is good until we have lost it. If we are blessed with good ministers, we frequently do not make use of them. We assume that we can always have an opportunity. Once they have departed, however, we shall then have many questions for them. We shall then grieve that we have not made more use of them. Therefore, make use of the godly while they are present, for they will depart from here.

Secondly, since both you and the ungodly will die, you are obligated to do something for the unconverted before they die. There are unconverted among your relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and business associates, and thus the Lord grants you the opportunity to be a means to their conversion. It ought to grieve you that so many of them are no more, and perhaps are already in hell. Not once did you address them, warn them, point out the way of salvation to them, or take them by the hand to lead them to Christ, even though you knew that they were unconverted and were running toward hell. I repeat, this ought to grieve you, namely, that you—as far as you are concerned—are guilty in regard to their condemnation. Therefore, no longer follow in Cain's footsteps by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Have compassion, and snatch them out of the fire while they are yet alive and before it is too late, for they and you are to die. Who knows—you might be a means unto their conversion and salvation. How sweet it will be to be able to say: "Behold, Lord, here am I and the children which Thou hast given me!" If they are not willing to listen

to you, you will preserve a peaceful conscience; and God, by means of you, will be glorified in His justice. Therefore, be filled with tender compassion toward precious souls. See to it that you are neither ashamed to speak of Christ and the way of salvation nor intimidated by either wisdom, greatness, riches, wickedness, or goodness. They will possibly not be as offended as you might fear, and you will subsequently meet with more approval than he who flatters with his tongue. Even if your words do not benefit them when spoken, they can come to remembrance years later and be a means unto conversion.

Thirdly, since you yourself will die, you must do something as far as you yourself are concerned. If you are unconverted, be fearful of death. If you are godly, rejoice over the fact that there will come an end to this miserable life and that death will usher in a happy life for you. Whoever you may therefore be, be prepared for your departure from this world.

If you are as yet *unconverted*, I have a word for you, so that, if it were possible, I might bring you to repentance by alarming you. Give ear, oh man—you who are wallowing in the earth as a mole; you who only esteem that which is visible; you who only yearn for the tangible; and you who are only concerned about that. This is the focal point of all your mental activity and dreams which you are pursuing with all your might, and is the goal of all your initiatives. Give ear, you who lead an idle and wanton life, and determine and seek your enjoyment to be in eating, drinking, amusements, splendor, and all sorts of frivolity. Give ear, ungodly blasphemers, gamblers, drunkards, immoral adulterers and fornicators, liars, backbiting slanderers, and unrighteous, wicked, and envious persons.

First, you are unconverted and are walking upon the broad way to hell. You are going to die and you will not be here much longer. Perhaps it will be over for you tomorrow. When the king of terrors separates your soul from your body, it will be finished as far as your indulgence in delicacies, wine, the playing of cards, and gambling are concerned. Gone will be your money, profit, honor, offices you are holding, expensive clothing, and whatever else you have occupied yourself with. You will not be able to preserve those things and they will all declare to you: “Depart to hell; we no longer associate with you; we are no longer for you.” They will no longer be able to entertain your fearful soul, nor be able to comfort you. Rather, they will all testify against you, and your oppressed conscience will be an unbearable burden to you.

Secondly, not only will joy have vanished, but terrors will come

in its place. Presently you are such a hero, have such a strong spirit, and fear neither death, devil, nor hell. When death comes, however, your courage will depart readily. That which Belshazzar experienced will also come upon you. For a moment, let me hold before you the mirror of this history and you will discover your future condition in it. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Dan 5:6). If the messenger of death were to come to you, saying, "Yet forty days and you shall perish"; or, "This night I shall require thy soul from thee"; would you then be joyful? Your conscience would then be very lively, and you would then have a different conception of the wrath of God and of eternal damnation than you presently have. If a drop of sweat will cling to every hair since God will be a terror to you, where will you then flee? Then seek out your previous ungodly company; they will flee from you, however. Let full dishes and goblets then be brought to you; but you will not be able to ingest them. Then play around with the money you have scraped together, but how wretched the sound of the coins will be! Then put on all your expensive clothing, but you will then say, "Away with all these rags." Then let all your prostitutes climb into your bed; but you will then say: "Depart from me; I do not want to see you." You will then say: "World, away with you; I abhor you." Tell me, what will you do then? Where will you take refuge? With God? With the foolish virgins you will find heaven to be closed. Then you will experience the truth of what you presently do not believe: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Prov 1:24-29). Where will you flee when the Lord will bring you into judgment for all your sins? Where will you flee when the Lord will command the devil to drag your soul to hell? Then you can weep and howl all you want, but there will be neither pity nor help for you, and you will find yourself in eternal despair and pain to which there will come no end. Therefore today, as you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your heart. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph 5:14).

You who are *godly*, however, need not be fearful of death. Instead, it should be to your comfort that you will not always remain here. When death comes, all your sorrow will come to an end. All dissatisfaction and restlessness; all weaknesses and pains; all poverty and concerns; and all sin and corruption will only follow you until death. You will leave all that behind, and all that will depart from you in the hour of death. What a blessing it is that there is deliverance, that our tribulations will very soon pass away, and that our weeping will be but for a short moment! It is true that death itself is dreadful, but it is at the same time also very beneficial. It cuts off all grievous and sinful crosses at once, and in one moment it will translate the soul into a state of felicity which it never could have truly anticipated prior to that. Death will be as the dreadful lion killed by Samson which, after having been killed, yielded sweet honey. It is as the Red Sea which served to deliver the children of Israel securely from Egypt and out of Pharaoh's hand. To die is to depart in peace and to begin residing with the Lord and to be with Christ. Therefore, believers, on the basis of Christ's merits, be of good courage as you bear your cross and as you face death. Be desirous to depart and to be with Christ. Being established by faith, triumph over this last enemy saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54-57).

#### *Exhortation to Set One's House in Order*

Since all men will die, you, too, will die—unconverted and godly alike. What is then more necessary than to prepare yourself for death? Oh, that my exhortation would stir you up to do so!

First, you who read or hear this read, I have a message from the Lord to you. The Lord says to you: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kings 20:1). I am not saying, "Prepare yourself to die tomorrow," for it may well be that you will not live until the morrow, but that in this night your soul will be taken from you. Death comes unexpectedly, and frequently when one is most busily engaged and is least thinking about death. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of" Matt 24:44,50.

Secondly, as uncertain as the moment of death is, so uncertain is the manner of death. Perhaps you will be snatched from this life in one moment by way of a heart attack, an accident, or by another

unanticipated event. Even if death will be preceded by an illness, you will perhaps immediately be unconscious and bereft of your mental faculties, or you will be so preoccupied with pain and anxiety that you will not be able to think composedly about God for one moment. Being thus troubled within, you will perhaps take the great step upon which eternity hinges.

Thirdly, everything is contingent upon death. As the tree falls, so it will lie. If you die as an unconverted person, your soul will go to hell; if you die as a converted person, your soul will instantly go to heaven and enter into joy. I am not suggesting that salvation is contingent upon the spiritual frame which the believer has at his final moment, but rather what he is in principle. If there is life within, his end will be peace—even if he must depart with much darkness, weakness of faith, and strife. Just as the external manner of dying (that is, whether someone has a difficult or gentle deathbed) does not render someone saved or unsaved, likewise does not the internal condition of the soul; that is, whether a believer essentially goes his way in joy and assurance, or with much anxiety.

Fourthly, a late conversion is seldom a good conversion. God generally hides Himself and Christ generally refuses grace to those who, in spite of all the means, have stubbornly persevered in yielding to their lusts, having wasted the entire time of life allotted to them. All their sorrow is but a being fearful of hell; all their supplication for grace is but an outburst caused by fear and anxiety; and all their fleeing to Jesus is but a vehement desire to be delivered from perdition. Therefore, do not wait until the last moment. Many are, however, not even serious at the end, but rather are insensitive as they approach their end. How dreadful will their end be!

Fifthly, a worldly person is of the opinion that one would not be able to live if he were to reflect continually and intensely about death. It is true indeed that he would not be able to live peacefully in sin. Sin would no longer be a delight, and fear would take all his joy away. They who speak or think in this fashion, however, demonstrate that they have never yet walked upon the pathway of salvation, and that they would rather go carelessly to hell than presently repent. Believers ought to know, however, that it is not only genuinely wise to live in a state of preparation for death, but also that it is a most delightful life. All that is of the world will lose its beauty, the cross will be viewed as soon coming to an end, the conscience will be at peace within, the hope of glory will yield joy, one will actively pursue sanctification, and all will be plain within the heart. How delightful is Paul's condition when he writes: "I have fought a good fight, I have

finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” 2 Tim 4:7-8!

Sixthly, what would we not do to have a joyous deathbed! What a dreadful death it will be if we have neglected the time of grace and cannot look forward to anything but being cast into hell immediately upon death! How wretched it is even for believers when we must die in darkness; if we do not know whether there has ever been grace in the soul; if we fear that we shall not be saved, but rather must perish at that very moment; or if we must breathe our last breath in such a state of confusion and perplexity! What a joyful deathbed it is, on the contrary, if we may be strong in the faith, know ourselves to be reconciled in Christ and clothed with His righteousness, see heaven opened and Jesus standing ready to receive the soul, and presently taste the beginning of eternal joy! Oh, then death is not death! However, this frequently follows upon being occupied habitually with the preparation for death. It can happen that a feeble Christian, who has struggled much with sin and has been lethargic in seeking after God, has nevertheless a joyous end, whereas one who was a strong Christian in his lifetime occasionally dies in darkness. However, that is the exception. Generally, dying will be consistent with the measure in which one has prepared for it. It is not contingent upon the many comforts one has enjoyed in this life, but according to what extent he has been exercised spiritually. Those who have had much strife in this life, have experienced much darkness, have lived in weakness of faith, and have wrestled with the power of corruption, generally die in faith. Therefore, he who desires to have a joyous deathbed ought to be active in spending much time in preparing for death.

*Question:* What am I to do? In what does preparation consist?

*Answer:* First, in this time wean yourself from this world. “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (Luke 21:34). A tree which has burrowed its roots deep in the earth can only be extracted from the earth with much pulling and tearing, whereas a young tree not yet deeply rooted can easily be extracted from the earth. Such is also true for a person who greatly cleaves to this earth. His thoughts are focused on the things of this world and these fully or partially occupy his heart. This quietly robs him of his time, and man finds himself overtaken by death without having prepared himself for it—and thus the dismay. Therefore, accustom

yourself to view everything as vanity, as unsatisfactory, as dangerous, and as transitory; and then make use of everything in this weaned condition of soul. It requires effort to be habitually weaned from the visible. However, having acquired and preserved such a disposition, one will be able to depart that much more easily, for the soul will have previously been emptied of all these things.

Secondly, learn to live by faith, in reliance upon the Word of God alone. It does not please the Lord to lead His children here by way of seeing. If we have too strong a desire for this without being able to be submissive or satisfied with the way of faith, it will frequently occur that we shall be perplexed when death comes. This would not have been so if, generally speaking, he had lived by faith. If one has previously not learned to rejoice in faith and thus to lean sweetly upon Christ, it will hardly be possible to learn this at the end. It will be in the hand of him who has learned this, however, and he will be able to depart, saying, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim 1:12).

Thirdly, strive continually to have a reconciled conscience which is at peace. You will offend continually, but be sure that you continue not in it, going your way with a confused conscience. That is the most direct way to become more confused in the end, when faith will be most assaulted. Rather, you must accustom yourself to arise immediately after a fall, receive the blood of Christ time and again, and wrestle so long until reconciliation and peace have been regained. This will teach you at death to lay your sin upon the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This will cause you to know that your conscience has been cleansed from dead works, and to have been cleansed from all sins in the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You will then know yourself to be clothed with Christ's righteousness and thus to be perfect in Him. You shall have courage to come before Him without fear in the judgment that follows death.

Fourthly, accustom yourself to keep death continually in mind and to live continually with an impression of dying. This cannot be learned so readily, for we have a natural aversion for this and very quickly forget about death. Even if there are some fleeting thoughts about it, this will neither beget a proper disposition toward dying, nor will it give us a wise heart. Pagans accustomed themselves to actively think about death. They said that *the life of the wise consists in the contemplation of death*. There were those who caused it to be called out every morning: "Remember that you are a man and that you will die." Christ frequently spoke of His death,

and saints prayed for a proper disposition toward death. “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee” (Ps 39:4-5). Moses did likewise: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps 90:12). As you accustom yourself to reflect upon death, strive to do everything as if it were your last deed, and to bear every cross as if you would be delivered from it by death that evening. How much patience this will bring forth and how little you will then strive in your conduct for honor, love, and advantage! How prepared you shall then be when death will come, having daily anticipated it for such a long time already! Therefore, engage yourself, for you must at once think as follows: “I must prepare myself; I must act.” Any disposition is acquired by way of much exercise.

Fifthly, hasten to bring your work to its conclusion. Do now what you would wish to have been completed at death. There is still so much unfinished work, and the time yet remaining is very short. Do you already have sufficient faith? Is your heart already warm with love? Are there no longer any sins that must be fought against and overcome? Have you already been weaned from the visible and do you live for the invisible? Have you already become an example of humility, meekness, generosity, spirituality, and love for your enemies? Have you already imprinted a footprint which your descendants will recognize and of which they will think, “Oh, how exemplary did he live! If only I would follow in his footsteps!” In all this you fall considerably short, and therefore hasten with the impression of having but little time left. How sweet will death be if, with Hezekiah, you will be able to say, “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” Isa 38:3!

Therefore, prepare yourself to die! “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt 26:41); “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Pet 4:7); “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning” (Luke 12:37). Be prepared for your journey, and, as the wise virgins, supply yourself with oil—faith, hope, and love—in your lamps, and thus await the coming of the Bridegroom. “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching” (Luke 12:37); “Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing” (Matt 24:46).

### *The State of the Soul after Death*

Having observed that all men will die, the question arises *how the soul fares after being separated from the body*. In chapter 10 [vol. #1, p. 307] we have dealt comprehensively with the soul, the essence of its existence, its faculties, and its operations by way of its faculties. God created man with a soul and a body, and they would not have been separated to all eternity had man not sinned. However, death, a separation of soul and body, has come into the world in consequence of sin. This results in the soul being separated for some time from the body, whereupon the body will return to dust. However, the soul is an independent entity and an immortal being, not being dependent upon the body for its existence. Upon being separated from the body, her essential existence continues, she retains her faculties—the intellect and the will—and continues to function as such. Immediately after death, the souls of believers are taken up into the third heaven to God and enjoy everything there which man, after soul and body have been reunited, will enjoy eternally. The intellect will be occupied with the immediate beholding of God, and the will shall be filled with love, perfect holiness, and inexpressible joy; however, the measure in which this will be experienced is not known to us. They immediately enjoy felicity Rev 14:13, immediately are in heaven (Luke 16:22); 2 Cor 5:1, are united with the church triumphant, are among “the spirits of just men made perfect” Heb 12:23, and are with Christ Phil 1:23 in whom is all their joy (1 Thess 4:18).

The souls of the unconverted also continue in their essential existence and retain both intellect and will—however, in the endurance of both punishment and pain (Luke 16:23). They are “the spirits in prison” 1 Pet 3:19, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” Jude 7.

There are abominable heresies concerning the state of souls when separated from the body. The *Papists* maintain that souls continue in their essential existence. It is their view, however, that souls who do not die in the commission of a mortal sin go to a fabricated purgatory, and that unbaptized children go to a certain place which is neither heaven nor hell, where they will have neither pain nor joy to all eternity. The *Anabaptists* believe that souls do continue in their essential existence until the day of judgment; however, they are asleep and are oblivious to everything—thus having neither pain nor joy. Many among the *Arminians* are of the same sentiment as the *Anabaptists*, maintaining that souls do not carry on any mental activity after death; that is, neither manifesting any activity nor being receptive for any activity. Among the

*Socinians*, who can neither be numbered among the Christians nor indeed are more than civilized pagans; and among the pagans (in life as well as in death) who have most in common with the *Epicureans*—*there are some who are in agreement with the Anabaptists*. Many of them (if not almost all) maintain, however, that the soul is no more than a divine breath, a characteristic, an operative function (albeit an intelligent function) just like all other human functions, such as strength, dexterity, etc. Moreover, when man dies, the soul returns as a breath unto God from whom it originated when He blew it into man's nostrils. And thus it returns to God as something belonging unto Him, and, just as is true for the souls of animals, it consequently vanishes and ceases to exist, and therefore is neither subject to pain nor to joy. Furthermore, they believe that in the resurrection another body and breath or motion are by renewal generated and will thus enjoy eternal life if that person was one of the righteous. If not, then its annihilation will be maintained. Others express themselves somewhat differently, but it all culminates in the same idea. It could be asked whether they believe in a resurrection at all. A rational human being can readily understand that such a new generation of a different body and a new breath is not one and the same person who lived previously and committed either good or evil. This would mean that in reality there would neither be a resurrection of the dead nor a last judgment.

### *The Immortality of the Soul after Death*

We shall first address the parties mentioned and defend the immortality of the soul and her subjection to pain in hell or her experience of joy in heaven; and we shall then “deliver” all those souls from purgatory.

*Question:* Upon death, is the soul of man, and does it remain, a personal, living, and rational being which enjoys eternal joy in heaven if it has been the soul of a believer? Or does it suffer eternal pain in hell, the place of the damned, if it has remained unconverted?

*Answer:* We answer in the affirmative. *Socinians* answer in the negative, and *Anabaptists* with the *Arminians* respond negatively to the last proposition. Our view is evident for the following reasons:

First, it is confirmed by such texts which state that the soul retains its being after death.

(1) “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Eccles 3:21). In Hebrew רֹּחַ (rouach) signifies spirit, heart, breath, wind, and soul. It signifies the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the divine

essence Ps 33:6, the angels Ps 104:4, and the soul of man: “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit” (Ps 31:5). The preacher relates in verse 20 what transpires with the body after death: Both the bodies of beasts and of men return to the dust, and in this they resemble each other. In verse 21 he shows what transpires with the souls of both and wherein they differ, the difference being that the souls of animals (their blood) flows down into the earth, whereas the souls of men ascend toward God who has given them, for the purpose of receiving the sentence of life or death from Him as Judge. He speaks of all souls in a general sense—the good as well as the evil—saying the same about all: They all return to God. This cannot mean a gracious acceptance and felicity for the wicked; instead, this can only be as their Judge.

(2) “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). If the soul did not continue in its essential existence, people would be able to kill the soul as well as the body. Since, however, they are only able to kill the body and not the soul, it is thus evident that the soul remains alive after death.

(3) “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt 22:32). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living subsequent to their death, for God is their God after their death. However, according to the body they are not alive; and thus they are alive according to the soul.

(4) “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven ... he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor 12:2,4). The apostle demonstrates here that the soul is able to exist and perceive outside of the body. Otherwise he would not have to doubt whether it happened out of the body or in the body. Thus, the soul is capable of being in the third heaven, knowing and enjoying things that are unspeakable, while the body is upon earth.

(5) “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:22-23). All those to whom believers come do actually exist and among them are also the spirits of just men made perfect—and thus their existence is real.

(6) “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for

the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season” (Rev 6:9-11). The altar is Christ (Heb 13:10). The souls of dead martyrs were covered by His reconciliation and were in His safe-keeping. Thus, the souls of martyrs truly exist after their death. These souls longed for the glorification of God’s justice in avenging the shed blood of His children, this being expressed by their crying. They had been glorified, which is indicated by the long white robes. They were both addressed and informed about what was yet to come. All of this shows very clearly that souls continue their existence after death, are living, have understanding, and are active. Even though some things are expressed in physical terms, so that they may be understood, yet the entire manner of speech makes it clear that they are to be interpreted in a manner which is consistent with souls.

*Evasive Argument:* It is said of Abel’s blood that it calls for vengeance Gen 4:10, and he is also said to speak after he died (Heb 11:4). This is, however, not true in a literal sense. It is merely indicative of his suffering and actions while he was alive. In like manner Rev 6:9-11 is to be interpreted.

*Answer:* We do not acknowledge this conclusion, as it lacks evidence. This text conveys something entirely different. Here it is not only stated what the souls did, but also what answer they received and what was done to them. Thus, the reference is to the soul, rather than to deeds. This is clear proof that, rather than sleep, they live after death, and use both reason and intellect.

Secondly, that the souls of believers do rejoice after death is evident from the description of their state after death, as well as from the longing the saints have for death. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). Mention is made here of felicity after death, and thus souls continue in their actual existence, for nothing can be said of something that does not exist, nor can it enjoy felicity. The felicity of souls does not consist in sleeping, but in enjoyment. Furthermore, sleeping is meant for the body; the soul does not sleep. The fact that they rest also does not indicate that they are sleeping. Both Christ and people do rest, although they are awake. Resting indicates being at liberty and the cessation of burdensome activities. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were

dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1).

If the souls of believers are in heaven after the body, the earthly tabernacle, has been dissolved or has died 2 Pet 1:13, then they are indeed happy. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). That which does not exist cannot be present with the Lord. Thus, these souls, upon having been separated from the body, are present with the Lord. Furthermore, the strong desire of believers to depart this world and to be present with the Lord is an indication that souls are in a much happier condition after this life than in this life, and thus souls are not asleep. Observe this desire also in the following text: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil 1:23). Death in and of itself is not desirable. A living dog is better than a dead lion. Paul was not that weak and sorrowful that he wished for death due to grief, for he had learned to be content and was able to do all things through Christ who strengthened him Phil 4:11,13. Yes, by God sustaining him, he took “pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses” (2 Cor 12:10). There was, however, a different reason why he had a desire to die, namely, to be with Christ, which was far better to him. Thus, the apostle knew that his soul would live after his death, and that it would be in a far better condition after death.

Just as the souls of believers rejoice in heaven after death, likewise the souls of the ungodly are sent to hell, there to endure eternal pain. “By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient” (1 Pet 3:19-20). Christ, by His Spirit and through Noah, preached to the disobedient world. However, upon their death their souls were sent to prison, that is, to hell. “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” Jude 7. If the souls of the disobedient of the first world and the souls of the ungodly from Sodom and Gomorrah are in prison and are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, then they continue to exist after death and are enduring punishment and eternal pain (Matt 25:46). Add to this the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23-24). The objective of this parable is to describe the condition of souls after this life in order to deter man from sin and to exhort him to the practice of virtue. To that end, the soul of Lazarus is depicted as

enjoying comfort in heaven, and the soul of the ungodly rich man is depicted as suffering grief in hell.

Thirdly, there is irrefutable evidence in the following examples: Christ, the thief on the cross, and others. Christ's soul most certainly continued in its actual existence after death. While dying he said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). He said to the thief, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise is the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2,4). Thus, Christ and the thief would be in the third heaven on the very day of their death. Therefore the actual existence of their souls continued and they were in heaven where there is nothing but joy. This is also true for the souls of the martyrs (Rev 6:9-11; Rev 7:9-10,14; Rev 14:13). From all this, it has been proven clearly and irrefutably that souls continue to exist after death, are alive and active, and either rejoice in heaven or suffer pain in hell.

Fourthly, this understanding is innate. The pagans knew this, and they were therefore of the opinion that souls move into other creatures. The fabrications of designated and delightful places, and fields as residences for such souls originate from this. Even until this very day, barbaric pagans have the impression that souls continue to exist after death.

*Objection #1:* (Eccles 3:19-21).

*Answer:* We have commented on this text earlier.

*Objection #2:* Consider these passages: "... before I go hence, and be no more" (Ps 39:13); "Rahel ... refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not" (Jer 31:15).

*Answer:* This means that they were not in the land of the living.

*Objection #3:* "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor 15:19). Paul is engaged in proving the resurrection of the dead, and among other things he proves thereby that believers were of all men most miserable if there were no resurrection. This would make no sense if believers were already in felicity prior to the resurrection, for they do not expect felicity until the resurrection at the last day. This indicates that they will not enjoy felicity until then.

*Answer* (1) Paul speaks of being miserable in this life, and he is not stretching it out to the resurrection at the last day.

(2) Paul is dealing with people who maintained that man is annihilated after death—both as to body and soul—and all the entertainment there is for man is to be enjoyed in this life alone, it being their proverb: "Eat, drink, play, for after death no one sings." The apostle refutes this, and demonstrates that there is joy

after this life, and that they therefore were not of all men most miserable since their hope was in Christ after this life.

*Objection #4:* “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (Dan 12:2). Here the dead are said to sleep, and thus souls do sleep.

*Answer:* Death is referred to as sleep. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. ... Howbeit Jesus spake of His death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep” John 11:11,13. The dead are said to sleep because of the many resemblances between both. Souls are never said to sleep, since this is contrary to the nature of a soul. Sleeping is characteristic of the body.

### *Purgatory is a Human Invention*

We shall now deal with the fable of purgatory.

*Question:* Do the souls of believers, after having been separated from the body in death, go to purgatory in order to be perfectly purified—be it by way of personal suffering or through the assistance of the prayers, masses, and merits of the saints? Or are the souls of believers taken to heaven immediately upon their death?

*Answer:* The point of contention does not relate to the death of the ungodly, for they go to hell immediately. The point of contention neither relates to whether the reformed come in purgatory, for even the Papists declare that they are delivered from this. Rather, the point is whether the Papists come there or not, for purgatory—that wondrous place—is only for them. Thus, in answer to these questions they confirm the first, and deny the second. We, on the contrary, deny the first and hold to the second. Our proof is as follows:

First, there is not one reference to purgatory in the entire Bible. They themselves do not know what to do about this—even if they were to ask the devil (as one of them did) to point them to a text.

Secondly, Scripture knows but two ways and two destinies: life and perdition, heaven and hell (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 16:22-23).

*Evasive Argument:* They who go to purgatory will come into heaven at last.

*Answer:* After death there are but two destinies. Purgatory would be a third one, and thus it must be rejected.

Thirdly, there is no need for a purgatory. It can neither remove sin nor cleanse the soul. Instead, the Lord Jesus cleanses His own from all sins. In Him they are perfect, and are the righteousness of God. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7); “And ye are complete in Him” (Col 2:10); “... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21).

What purpose could a purgatory have since all sins have already been removed? Furthermore, a purgatory cannot remove sin, for there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. It is a physical fire which cannot bring about the cleansing of the soul. The intercession of the saints and the masses for souls of the deceased are but fabrications. The merits of the saints are null and void. The real issue is money, and with money heaven cannot be opened at all—neither at an earlier nor at a later moment. The distinction between mortal and forgivable sins is not biblical. The Bible teaches that all sin is mortal, and that there is but one unforgivable sin: the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, Scripture states plainly that the souls of believers immediately enter heaven upon death. When the earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, heaven will be our portion (2 Cor 5:1). To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ vs. 8. To depart and to be with Christ is better than life (Phil 1:23). It would be better to live until the last day, than to be in purgatory (if there were such a thing) until that time. The dead who die in the Lord are blessed from henceforth (Rev 14:13). This was not only true from the moment that this was said, for also prior to that time there was salvation in Christ for those who died, and thus also from the time of their death forward. The converted thief was already with Christ upon the day of his death. “Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” Christ confirmed this with the word “verily.” Hereby is not expressed that He was saying it to him today, but rather that today he would be with Christ in heaven. The first did not need to be confirmed, for the thief and others could adequately hear this. Rather, it was the second which the thief requested, and He promised him that he would enjoy this on this very day, immediately upon his death.

*Objection #1:* “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech 9:11).

*Answer* (1) This most certainly cannot be a reference to purgatory—not even according to their proposition—for it did not exist as yet. Rather, this would then be a reference to that fabricated place where the believers of the Old Testament were kept until the time of Christ.

(2) The prophet speaks of the deliverance from the prison of Babylon. He refers to this as a pit, since prisons generally were, and still are, in caverns under the earth. “There being no water” means that there was no refreshment which those who were thirsty could receive by drinking.

*Objection #2:* "... lest at any time ... thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matt 5:25-26).

*Answer:* This is a parable that relates to the dealings of creditors with debtors who are without means. Hereby Christ is referring to the eternal damnation which awaits unrepentant sinners, from which there will be no deliverance until full payment is made for their sins—which will not occur to all eternity.

*Objection #3:* "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt 12:32). Thus, forgiveness can yet be anticipated after this life; this can only occur in purgatory.

*Answer:* This means that no forgiveness can be anticipated after this life, for it is stated expressly that sin will not be forgiven in the world to come. No mention is made at all that there is forgiveness in the world to come. This is as much as to say: either now or never.

*Objection #4:* "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15). It is thus expressly stated that everyone will be tried by fire and that he will be saved by fire.

*Answer* (1) If one would wish to construct a purgatory from this, it would first have to be proven that trial and salvation by fire do occur after the day of man's death. However, the apostle speaks of what man's experience in this life will be.

(2) Fire is not to be understood here as physical fire which would be capable of affecting man's soul and his works. Rather, fire must be understood as referring to persecution and oppression in this world for the sake of the Word (cf. Zech 3:2; Mal 3:2-3). "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke 12:49). The apostle says that by way of persecution it will be manifest how and what everyone has built upon the foundation of the gospel. When persecution comes, nothing but the truth will be able to be the foundation for one's suffering, and whatever has been peripheral to that he will reject, and thus the fire will save him. If, however, he has conducted himself in a genuine manner, he will be bold in suffering and his uprightness will be manifest in the day of trial.

*Objection #5:* "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil 2:10). No one can honor Jesus under the earth,

however, except those who are in purgatory, and thus there must be a purgatory.

*Answer:* There are indeed creatures under the earth and there are also devils there. However, Christ, by His suffering and death, has merited all power in heaven and on earth, and everything must be subject to Him—which the devils were when He commanded them to depart. The bending of the knees cannot be taken in a literal sense, for souls in purgatory have no knees. Instead, it signifies subjection to Him—be it willingly or unwillingly. It thus remains a fact that there is no purgatory. Consequently, all popish souls have been delivered from it.

In addition to purgatory, the Papists, on very precarious grounds, fabricate two additional subterranean localities. The one locality was for the fathers of the Old Testament, from which Christ would have delivered them in His descent into hell. Since they are already delivered from this, however, we shall spare ourselves any further effort. The other fabricated locality is for children who die without being baptized, and in their view may neither enter heaven nor hell, but must eternally remain secluded there without pain or joy. We have refuted this above, for Scripture knows of no such place. The children of members of the covenant have the promise of salvation. It is not in the hands of adults to save or cause children to perish by either having them baptized or by depriving them of it.

Thus, the soul does not die, but rather continues its actual existence, retains its intellect and will, and immediately upon death remains active, without coming into purgatory. It will either suffer all the terrors of hell and endure the wrath of God; or it will enjoy all joy and happiness in immediate fellowship with God in perfect love and holiness, doing so in the presence of angels and the souls of the just made perfect, eternally to jubilate hallelujahs. This all being true, you who are unconverted ought to fear! Do not entertain the illusion that there will yet be the hope of being saved by being purified in purgatory. It is but a fable and you will find yourself deceived when immediately you will find yourself to be in hell, from which there will be no deliverance to all eternity.

And you, believers, do not be fearful of death, for according to the promises of the God of truth, your soul will immediately be taken into glory and joy. You may freely desire to depart and to be with Christ, which will be far better for you. Oh, what a sudden change it will be when the soul will find herself free from all sin, darkness, and torments, and instead may behold the countenance of God in righteousness and be satisfied with His likeness! She will thus be preserved until the last day, when the soul will be reunited

with the body in order to enjoy forever with body and soul that glory and that joy which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). Amen.

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## CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-ONE

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### The Resurrection of the Dead

When after death the body will have returned unto dust, and the soul will have been preserved in her designated place until the last day, then all particles will return to their original substance to constitute the very same body with which the soul will be reunited. These will constitute the very same human being who previously existed. To arise from the dead or from the grave occasionally signifies:

(1) to be delivered from great oppression: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezek 37:12);

(2) regeneration: “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together” (Eph 2:5-6); “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead” (Eph 5:14).

However, it generally refers to the actual resurrection of the deceased. This specifically refers to those who, in both the Old and New Testaments, have been resurrected by way of a miracle, and have subsequently died again—as well as to the general resurrection of all men when the Lord Jesus will come to execute judgment at the end of the world. It is the latter we shall now discuss.

This doctrine, which cannot be deduced from nature, is ridiculed by pagans and rejected by heretics. However, the Holy Scriptures reveal it so clearly—to the terror of the ungodly and the comfort of the godly—that it is amazing that men dare to deny it in like fashion as those during the time of the apostles who began to contradict it. “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12).

*The Nature of This Resurrection*

This resurrection will not have a natural cause—as if those bodies could again be brought to life after a period of time by certain motions, changes, and transformations. This can neither be accomplished by an angel nor any other creature. Rather, this is a work of omnipotence and will therefore be performed by God, the Creator of heaven and earth, “Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:17); “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them” (John 5:21).

Just as there neither were nor could have been secondary causes in creation, it will be likewise at the resurrection of the dead, for it is a work of omnipotence in which no finite powers are involved. The angels will not be instrumental in the resurrection itself. However, God will use them to gather those before the judgment seat who have been resurrected: “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt 24:31). Just as Jesus generally made use of external signs when performing miracles to make the miracle all the more obvious, so the Lord will also add an external sign at the general resurrection of the dead: a very great sound that will resound throughout the world. “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor 15:52); “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess 4:16).

Enoch and Elijah will not be resurrected, for they did not die. Neither will those who have arisen from the graves at the resurrection of Christ, nor all those who will be alive at the last day, be resurrected, for they will not die but be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor 15:51-52). However, with the exception of all such persons, all who have died from the beginning of the world unto the end (either prior to or after their birth) will arise—be they small or great, be they godly or ungodly. The very same bodies which were either burned, drowned in the sea, eaten by beasts or men, or died a common death and thus returned to dust—those same bodies will be reunited with their very own souls which neither died nor were able to die, and thus they will be the same persons they were prior to their death. However, their physical characteristics will have been changed. This change will render the ungodly immortal and capable of eternally bearing all punishments and the suffering of pain. The godly, who according to the soul will have the image

of God perfectly, and who will be bodily conformed to Christ Phil 3:21, will put on incorruption, immortality, glory, power, and spirituality 1 Cor 15:42,44,53-54.

All men will be resurrected simultaneously on the last day. Prior to that time there will not be a physical resurrection of martyrs who would reign with Christ for a thousand years, as *chiliasts* or *millennialists* fabricate from Rev 20. Rather, when Christ will come to execute judgment, all men will be resurrected simultaneously. “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24); “... at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor 15:52); “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). How astonishing it will be when all particles will return to their original substance and every bone will return to its skeleton—when the dead will become alive and stand together upon the earth!

Two matters must be proven more specifically: 1) that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and 2) that the identical bodies will be resurrected.

*Both the Godly and the Ungodly Will be Resurrected*

*Question:* Will there truly be a resurrection of the dead of both the godly and the ungodly?

*Answer:* The *Socinians* insist that the soul will no longer exist after death, the same body will not arise again, and the ungodly will not arise at all. This is therefore a total denial of the resurrection. We, however, deem the resurrection of the dead—both of the good as well as the evil—to be an irrefutable truth.

This is confirmed by express textual references.

First, there is Job 19:25-27: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

(1) Job does not speak of a physical restoration from his misery, but of a resurrection on the last day: “He shall stand at the latter day.”

(2) He anticipates this to be after his death when the worms will have destroyed his skin and his body, and he will have turned to dust.

(3) He states that Christ will stand at the last day, that is, make him alive again.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Statenvertaling differs here from the KJV. The Dutch text reads as follows: “Hij zal de laatste over het stof opstaan,” that is, “He shall at the latter day resurrect my dust.” In the KJV this reads: “He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

(4) He states that with his own eyes he will see God in the flesh.

All this cannot relate to the restoration of his health, but is a clear reference to the resurrection on the last day.

Secondly, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). This reference is neither to the deliverance from Babylon nor from Antiochus, having spoken previously of these. Instead the prophet speaks of what should happen subsequently, namely, that *Michael (that is, who is like unto God)* who is the Lord Jesus, would arise in a most distressful time such as had never been before. This time of distress would be when *Gog and Magog* would surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Rev 20:9).

(1) At that time the Lord Jesus will come to execute judgment; that is, when all the dead shall be resurrected (vss. 11-15). In these verses the very same matters are recounted in the identical order as they are recorded in Daniel, and it is therefore evident that they refer to the same matter. However, Rev 20 clearly pertains to the coming of Christ to execute judgment, and to the resurrection of the dead. This is therefore also true for (Dan 12:2).

(2) At that time the “wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3). This neither refers to the deliverance from Babylon, nor from Antiochus, for the priests were wicked.

(3) Upon this resurrection either eternal life or eternal contempt would follow, which will not occur other than at the end of world.

(4) At that time the dead will be resurrected and arise. When it is said that there will be “many” rather than “all,” this is not suggestive of a contrast to others who would not be resurrected. Rather, it implies that there are many dead. Or else it points to the distinction between those who will inherit salvation and those who will go lost. Many will arise unto eternal life, and many unto eternal contempt. There is a similar manner of speech in the following passage: “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God ... hath abounded unto many; ... many were made sinners ... many be made righteous” Rom 5:15,19. As a confirmation of this truth, consider (Isa 26:19).

Thirdly, “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:39-40). A *Socinian* concludes from this that the deceased

no longer exist and come to a renewed existence in the resurrection. The text confirms their existence, however, for they have eternal life prior to being resurrected in the last day. That which is nonexistent is incapable of being resurrected, for that which is resurrected already existed, even though it was not alive. Nothing can be said about something that does not exist.

Fourthly, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom 8:11). It does not say here, as the *Socinians* maintain, that another person will take the place of the deceased. Resurrection implies the restoration of that which has decayed, and *our mortal bodies* will be made alive. Thus there is no substitution of one person for another.

Fifthly, it is evident *that the ungodly will also be resurrected*

(1) From Dan 12:2, where the prophet states that “many ... shall awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt.”

(2) From what the Lord Jesus says: “And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). A *Socinian* will say that the reference is to spiritual resurrection; however, the text refutes him. Consider also “... all that are in the graves.” To be in the grave never signifies being in an unconverted state, nor does coming out of the grave signify conversion. Furthermore, those who are in the grave will not be regenerated or converted. Therefore this text cannot be a reference to regeneration. Verse 25 refers to spiritual resurrection. There the unconverted are referred to as the dead, and being made alive is limited to all who hear the voice of Christ, in contrast with others who do not hear Him. Moreover, the resurrection is said to be unto damnation as well as unto life. This cannot be said of regeneration, for that is only unto life. The ultimate destiny of either damnation or life is applicable to those who do good and those who do evil. The reference is therefore not to regeneration, but to the resurrection of the dead.

(3) “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, *that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*” (Acts 24:15). It cannot be stated more clearly than this.

*Evasive Argument:* This only proves the resurrection of the good, for the apostle speaks of a resurrection which he anticipated. By those whom he calls the “unjust” he understands the good, who prior to their conversion were unjust.

*Answer* i) Then some must have been righteous prior to their

conversion, for otherwise there could not have been a distinction between the just and the unjust, and thus none are excepted here.

ii) Paul's comforting hope indeed referred to the resurrection of the just; however, his declaration was of a general nature and thus encompassed all. There is a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

(4) This is also confirmed in 2 Cor 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." If all men are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, then they must first arise; they also who have done evil will appear there and bear their punishment according to their evil. Therefore the ungodly will also arise.

*Evasive Argument:* By "for we all" is to be understood of those persons who will yet be alive on the last day.

*Answer:* Paul speaks of *all* who were living at that time; that is, he himself and all to whom he was writing, whose ears and eyes this letter would reach. At the same time he includes all men, for as they are all alike in death, so will they also be alike in the resurrection. He is therefore here not speaking of those people only who will be living on the last day, but of all men—good and evil. We have thus observed that all men will arise.

### *The Same Bodies that Died Will be Resurrected*

*Question:* Will the same bodies which died also be resurrected? The *Socinians* answer negatively, and we affirmatively for the following reasons:

First, it is evident from the words "to arise" and "to be resurrected." If other bodies were to be created, then there would neither be a resurrection nor a rising again.

Secondly, the Scriptures say most clearly that the same bodies which we had in this life and which died will arise.

(1) There is (Job 19:25-27). See our comments in the above. I shall see God in my flesh and I shall see Him with my eyes.

(2) "It [the body] is sown [that is, dies and is buried] in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" 1 Cor 15:42-44,53. The apostle shows that in the resurrection our bodies will have different characteristics, but that it will be the same entity. For he states that the body which is sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption, and that this corruptible and mortal body will put on incorruption and immortality. He speaks here of the identical

subject, that is, how it will be in death and how it will be in the resurrection. If, upon being resurrected, the body which dies would become something else as far as substance is concerned, he would not be able to say “this body.”

(3) “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil 3:21). He speaks of *our* body and of *our vile* body, and states what will happen to it in the resurrection: it will be fashioned like unto a glorious body.

*Evasive Argument:* This manner of speech implies nothing else but that we shall have another body—just as is true for a flower which reappears in the month of May.

*Answer:* We never say that a fallen leaf reappears. If we say this concerning a flower, we understand it to refer to the same type of flower and as proceeding from the same root. There is also no agreement, however, as far as use of language is concerned. It is stated expressly here: *our*, *this*, and *vile*.

Thirdly, it is also evident from the resurrection of Christ who with His own body, which had died, became alive again. The actual body which had been laid in the grave arose and left the grave. Therefore the angels said, “He is not here: for He is risen” (Matt 28:6). When Christ came to His disciples, He said, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have” (Luke 24:39). It is also proven by the resurrection of the saints at the time of Christ’s death and resurrection. It is expressly stated there that those bodies which had been buried—those bodies of the saints which had expired—were in actuality resurrected. “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (Matt 27:52). Thus, the resurrection pertains to the identical bodies.

Fourthly, it is also confirmed by the righteousness of God which demands that it will go well with the righteous and ill with the ungodly. This does not always occur in this life, and thus it must occur after this life. “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:6-8). This righteous retribution, oppression, and comfort would occur in the day of Christ. This could not occur, however, unless they were resurrected and unless the same bodies were resurrected. For otherwise the same bodies which had suffered would not find rest, but others instead. And the same bodies which had been troublesome would not in turn be troubled

and punished with flaming fire, but others instead. The apostle states expressly, however, that this must occur to the same bodies. "... that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10). From all this it is evident that the same bodies will be resurrected.

*Objection #1:* "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep" (Job 14:10-12).

*Answer* (1) A comparison is made here between what man is in his life and in his death. At his death he is no more in the land of the living, nor among people, nor will he be seen any longer.

(2) He will neither return to nor be in the company of men. He will arise neither naturally nor by his own power.

(3) He will not arise prior to the last day when the heavens will pass away with a great noise (2 Pet 3:10). All this we readily admit, but it does not therefore follow that man will not arise on the last day.

*Objection #2:* "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity" (Eccles 3:19).

*Answer:* In this life man is preeminent above the beasts in many ways. In death they resemble each other in that they both die and their bodies return to dust. However, the difference in them is that the soul of animals goes downward and is annihilated, whereas the soul of man goes upward to God, and thus continues its existence. Furthermore, the body of man will be resurrected on the last day to be reunited with the soul. The resemblance of which the preacher speaks here pertains to death. He does not, however, mention the resurrection; therein they do not resemble each other.

*Objection #3:* "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor 15:50); "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them" (1 Cor 6:13).

*Answer* (1) The apostle does not speak here of the essence of the body, but rather of its weakness and corruption which will be taken away; in the place of corruption, dishonor, and weakness, the body will receive incorruption, glory, and power (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44,53-54).

(2) When the apostle says that the belly will be destroyed, he is referring to the natural use of food and drink. The latter will cease at death and in the resurrection the belly will no longer serve the purpose of digesting food.

*Objection #4:* “They are equal unto the angels” (Luke 20:36).

*Answer:* This is not true as far as essence is concerned, but rather to the fact that they neither die, marry, nor procreate.

*Objection #5:* “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him,” etc. (1 Cor 15:36-41). Paul demonstrates here that the same body which dies will not become alive again, but rather that God grants a different body.

*Answer* (1) Paul is answering the following question: “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Cor 15:35). He thus confirms the resurrection of the dead, and if there is a resurrection of the dead, it follows that the same bodies will arise; else there would be no resurrection, but a new creation instead. Rather, he asks concerning the manner in which this resurrected body will function, as well as about its qualities.

(2) The Lord Jesus applies this same comparison to His resurrection (John 12:24). And yet Christ arose with His own and very same body.

(3) The apostle shows that death must precede the resurrection and that the very same grain becomes alive again, the very same shoot and corn coming from the same grain. Thus also man’s own and identical body will become alive again. From this very same body a different body comes forth, not in essence, but as far as characteristics are concerned—as we have observed in verse 40, etc. Therefore, it will not be resurrected with the same characteristics it had when it died, but with more glorious characteristics, and these will be more preeminent in the one than in the other.

*Objection #6:* Many bodies have been burned and have even been eaten by beasts and men. It is therefore impossible that the same bodies would arise again.

*Answer:* “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matt 22:29). God is omniscient and knows where every particle is located, and He is almighty to bring them together again, even though we cannot understand this. Take a pound of steel filings and mix it with twenty pounds of filings of copper, tin, lead, and sand. Would an ignorant person be able to understand how—without melting and removing it from the container—all the steel can be separated and brought together from all the other materials from which it cannot be distinguished? Would he not say that this is impossible? And yet it can be done quickly and easily by rolling

a magnet around in the mixture which will only attract the steel, so that it can all be brought together again to its former weight.

We have thus abundantly vindicated this most comforting doctrine of the resurrection.

*This Doctrine Is a Terror to the Ungodly and a Comfort to the Godly*

The doctrine of the resurrection is a terror to the ungodly, for the very body, which they now cherish so much, and for which they slave so much to satisfy and beautify it, will eternally bear unbearable pain in hell. *Those eyes* which you now misuse so greatly to stir up filthy lust, whereby you now display the wrath, pride, and vanity of the heart, will behold with terror the Lord Jesus, the righteous Judge, and will never see light any more. *Those ears*, which are now ready to receive all vanities, curiosities, immoral language, foolishness, and backbiting, will hear with terror the sentence of the Judge: “Depart from Me, ye cursed,” and to all eternity your ears will be filled with the howling of those who are damned together with you, along with the dreadful manifestation of God’s wrath. *That mouth and tongue*, which you now misuse to curse, lie, backbite, say vain things, indulge, carouse, drink, and fornicate, will then howl and scream, and in grief you will chew on that tongue. Instead of the scents which you exude to show your greatness, make yourself attractive, arouse others sexually, and be stimulated toward fornication yourself, there shall be nothing but unbearable stench for you. You who now despise the smell of the poor will be no more than a filthy stench. *Those hands* which now handle cards and dice, and which you now misuse in unrighteousness and the execution of all manner of subtle devices, you will then wring in pain. Yes, all those members which you are now using as weapons of unrighteousness to serve the world and sin will eternally be in the flames. Oh, dreadful state! Oh unconverted, if only you had some perception of this! May the terror of the Lord persuade you to believe!

As much as the resurrection of the dead is a terror to the ungodly, so much is it a comfort to the godly. Believers have much sorrow in this life—also according to the body. Many have weak bodies; are full of pain and subject to many sicknesses and mishaps; weep and cry sorrowfully; observe with sorrow the ungodliness of the world; must endure being mimicked by many; must hear the contemptuous, biting, and slanderous words of their opponents; and must suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and wrong. Moreover, their corruptible body burdens the soul and their earthly tabernacle oppresses their heart so filled with concerns. Believers, be it known, however, that your bodies, in which you

must now suffer so much, will one day be delivered from all sorrows. The Lord will then wipe all tears from your eyes and will change this vile body so that it may be conformed to the glorious body of Christ. Then your body will shine forth as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament. Your eyes will rejoice in beholding your beloved Jesus and all those glorious things which are to be seen in heaven. Your ears will delight themselves in hearing the heavenly hallelujahs, and you will join them in singing the heavenly doxologies. All that God has prepared to the delight of your body, the Lord will cause you to enjoy forever. What a wondrous exchange that will be! Therefore, in all patience suffer all that is distasteful to the body, and counteract your suffering by the expectation of glory.

*Believers Exhorted to Use Their Bodies to the Glory of God*

If such glory is to be anticipated for your bodies, oh believers, then also use your bodies presently for the service of the Lord. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:12-13); “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:19-20). The inner man is concealed from the eye of man; however, it is made manifest by the body. If we then are to let our light shine before men in order that God might be glorified, we must do so with the body. Therefore, give heed to *your entire physical constitution*. Your conduct ought to be such that you do not give the impression of being affectatious or fraudulent. Let your conduct be upright, natural, moral, wise, honorable, and pleasing. Use *your eyes* to behold the works of God and for the reading of His Word. Be on guard for offending by way of your eyes or to let your eyes be the cause of offenses. See to it that your eyes are neither stern, angry, proud, shifty, shameless, adulterous, curious, nor unstable. Rather, control them so that they may convey wisdom, dignity, honor, and straightforwardness, and let them be moved in earnestness, showing friendliness or compassion—all according to what the subjects are. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” (Prov 4:25). May it be your continual prayer “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Ps 119:37). Close *your ears* to all foolishness,

vain and frivolous conversations, backbiting, and curiosity. Rather let your ear be open for the Word of the Lord, for the complaints of the poor and sorrowful, and with composure seek to understand well what is being said to us. Use *your tongue* to God's honor; that is, to sing His praises, to declare His perfections, and to be of benefit to your neighbor. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph 4:29); "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Ps 34:12-13). Make David's resolution your own: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Ps 39:1). May it be your continual prayer: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps 141:3). Use *your hands* to be diligent in an honorable profession. "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess 4:11). In all the management of your body and the utilization of its life, only endeavor to adorn godliness, to be an example to others, and to render glory to God—until this corruptible put on incorruption, this mortal immortality, and this vile body glory.

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## CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-TWO

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### Concerning the Last Judgment and the End of the World

When all men who are to be born according to God's decree have come into existence and become the recipients of life, and the elect will have been converted and gathered in, the Lord, upon a day designated by Him, will summon all men before His judgment seat and publicly judge them. God has dominion and reigns over all men who live upon earth. Already in this life He punishes the ungodly and chastises His children; this is also denominated a judgment: "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps 119:120). God also judges every man who by death is translated from time to eternity, sending them to their destination. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). There will come a moment, however, when God will cause all men to appear before Him collectively, and this is preeminently referred to as the eternal judgment (Heb 6:2).

#### *Scripture's Testimony Concerning the Last Judgment*

That there will be such a public and general judgment cannot be ascertained from nature. It can only be ascertained from Scripture and be confirmed by faith. The human conscience also convinces the heathen that they must anticipate the judgment of God after this life, culminating in either glory or damnation (Rom 2:15). It is also common knowledge that God is a righteous Judge who will cause it to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. That which Solomon says is also in some measure imprinted upon man's nature: "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them

that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked” (Eccles 8:12-13). This does not always happen in this life, however, and therefore one can conclude that it will occur after this life. However, the general and public nature of this judgment and procedure are only revealed in Scripture.

That there will be such a judgment is evident from these texts and many others: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” Jude 14-15; “But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Eccles 11:9); “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccles 12:14); “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36); “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10); “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom” (2 Tim 4:1).

These suffice to convince a believer of the Word of God of the truth of these matters. Additional texts will be presented as we proceed.

*The Final Judgment Executed by God in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.*

The Judge is God who created heaven and earth. Abraham calls him “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25); David and Paul call Him “the righteous Judge” (2 Tim 4:8); and this judgment is “the righteous judgment of God” Rom 2:5, executed by “God the Judge of all” (Heb 12:23).

However, this judgment will be executed by the Lord Jesus in a visible manner. “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27). The reason for this is that He, as the Son of God, has assumed the human nature, has been obedient to the Father unto the death of the cross, and has executed the great work of redemption for the elect, in consequence of which the good pleasure of God would prosper in His hand (Isa 53:10). This is what the Lord Jesus says, “For the Father judgeth no man, (that is, separate from the Son and in such a visible manner) but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”

(John 5:22). This is also to be observed in the following passage, “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

The Lord Jesus will come from heaven as Judge. He will not come to earth to reign a thousand years, as the premillennialists are dreaming; they misinterpret Rev 20. Rather, He will come upon a great cloud—not clothed with humility, but in power and glory, the greatness of which far exceeds one’s imagination. Once already Christ has been transfigured on the holy mountain before the eyes of His three disciples, who were witnesses of His majesty and glory which He received from God (cf. Matt 17:5; 2 Pet 1:17-18).

His glorious appearance will, however, also infinitely exceed that event when He will come in His essential glory and in the glory of His Father, together with the holy angels who will accompany Him as His servants. Observe this in the following passages: “He (the Son of man) shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26); “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). The manifestation of this glory will be all the more awesome due to:

(1) The great sound of the last trumpet: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess 4:16).

(2) The splendor of the throne which will be placed in the clouds upon which He as Judge will be seated. The splendor of this throne is shown to Daniel in a vision. “His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire” (Dan 7:9). Of this throne the Lord Jesus says that He will “sit upon the throne of His glory” (Matt 25:31).

(3) The innumerable multitude of holy angels who will be present there as His servants, “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matt 25:31). Oh, how awesome and majestic will the appearance of that great Judge be!

It is also written that the saints will judge: “Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28); “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor 6:2). They will, however, not judge with legal authority and power; rather, as members of Christ they will enhance the glory and the work of their Head—particularly approving of the judgment of Christ, as is written of an angel, “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy

judgments” (Rev 16:7). They will also do so with their deeds which will become manifest there, and with their godly presence they will condemn the ungodly, as Noah did the first world (Heb 11:7).

#### *The Objects of This Judgment: The Devils and All Men*

Those who will be judged are:

(1) *The devils* whom God will cast down to hell, and deliver into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment 2 Pet 2:4, having reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day Jude 6. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor 6:3).

(2) *All men* without exception: great, small, young, old, rich, poor, kings, and beggars. No qualifications will come into consideration here. He who is a human being will be judged: “And before Him shall be gathered all nations” (Matt 25:34); “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10); “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10); “... who shall judge the quick and the dead” (2 Tim 4:1); “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31). The ungodly, even though they “shall not stand in the judgment” Ps 1:5, will nevertheless be there. Believers will also be present at this general judgment Matt 25:34—even though they will not go into perdition, but instead will be translated from death to life.

#### *The Execution of this Judgment*

In the execution of this judgment we shall consider all that belongs to a righteous judgment, such as citation, appearance, cross-examination, the pronouncement of sentence, and execution.

First, the *citation* or the issuance of a subpoena will occur by the voice of the archangel, the trumpet of God 1 Thess 4:16, and the great sound of a trumpet (Matt 24:31). The contents of this will be: “Arise ye dead and come to the judgment.”

Secondly, the *appearance* of the defendants will follow immediately upon this. No one will be able to turn aside as if the Lord were not his lawful judge, nor will anyone be able to plead extenuating circumstances. No one will be able to hide himself, nor avoid this judgment. No one will be forgotten, for the omniscient and omnipotent God will cause everyone to appear, and the angels will gather them before the throne. The Lord Jesus will separate the good from the evil, placing the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left hand. The good will be taken to meet Christ in the clouds, whereas the wicked will remain standing upon the earth. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together

with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17). Concerning this separation we read: “... and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matt 25:32-33). The angels will also be used to that end: “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt 24:31); “The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just” (Matt 13:49).

Thirdly, subsequent to this, *the examination* will be conducted meticulously. All the sins of every person will be made manifest there. These include:

(1) *All thoughts* which everyone has ever thought, and thus also the most intimate frame of soul: “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men” (Rom 2:16); “... until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1 Cor 4:5).

(2) *All words* which everyone has ever spoken: “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36-37); “To execute judgment upon all ... of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” Jude 15.

(3) *All deeds* which have been committed, either secretly or publicly, or have been committed in conjunction with others; and all the motions of the members of the body, as well as what has been done with each member—with eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. It will be manifest how we have obtained our belongings and how we have used them—our clothing, homes, furnishings, gardens, food and drink—as well as how we have engaged in our profession and what our conduct has been. It will be revealed how we have used the means of grace—every sermon, every conviction, and the Word of God which we have had in our homes. It will pertain to the duration of our life and what we have done every year, month, day, and hour. In one word, everything will be considered—small and great, good and evil. This will not only be true in a general sense, but for every individual matter. It will not only occur in the conscience of every man, but it will be made manifest to all. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccles 12:14).

The standard by which this examination will occur is the *law*, which God has written upon the heart of every man (Rom 2:14-15),

and which He has declared more plainly to the church by way of the Scriptures. According to this law men will be judged as to their status. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (Rom 2:16). When the apostle says, “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” Rom 2:16, he does not mean to say that the gospel will be the rule by which this examination will be conducted, and whereby the quick and the dead will be judged, for the gospel will never have been proclaimed to most of them. Instead he is saying that in proclaiming the gospel, he also declared at the same time that there would be such a general judgment and that, by the terror of the Lord, he had sought to persuade men (2 Cor 5:11). The gospel will magnify the sins of the unconverted and make their damnation all the more severe, for “it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (Matt 11:22). Believers will be acquitted by reason of the gospel, however, since they are partakers of the satisfaction and holiness of the Lord Jesus and thus have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them (Rom 8:4). The law is therefore the standard whereby man’s disposition, thoughts, words, and deeds will be judged. This is the opening of the books—the book of everyone’s conscience, the book of God’s omniscience, as well as the book of God’s eternal decree. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12).

*Question:* Will the sins of believers also be made manifest in this judgment?

*Answer:* Some answer negatively, and others in the affirmative. It is not a fundamental doctrine of faith, and we therefore need not render each other suspect about this. We maintain that the sins of believers will be made manifest in the judgment—however, not as being unforgiven. This is evident:

(1) From general statements which are all-inclusive and do not make the sins of believers an exception. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12; cf. Eccles 12:14; Acts 17:31). Whenever Scripture makes no exception, we also may make none.

(2) From the fact that both believers and the ungodly will appear before the judgment seat of God, He being their Judge as well as of the ungodly. Since a righteous judge will most carefully examine what is both for and against the defendant, it thus follows that the

judgeship of the Lord Jesus demands that He also examine the deeds of the godly. “The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books” (Rev 20:12).

(3) From the express statement that those faithful ministers who watch over souls “must give account” (Heb 13:17). An account cannot be given, however, except by a careful disclosure of one’s entire conduct, and thus the imperfections and failures of the faithful will of necessity also be made public.

(4) When considering that the justice of God can only become manifest in the acquittal of believers if guilt and satisfaction are contrasted with each other.

(5) When considering that the satisfaction of Christ can only be viewed in its magnitude and efficacy when the sins for which He has made satisfaction are made manifest.

(6) When considering that the goal of salvation is the praise of God’s glorious grace and mercy, and this cannot be perceived except by manifestation of the guilt incurred by the vessels of mercy.

(7) When considering that the godly have committed sins in conjunction with the ungodly. Thus, if the sin of an ungodly person committed in conjunction with a godly person is made manifest, then the sin of the godly person must become manifest likewise.

*Objection #1:* The Judge Himself has made satisfaction for all their sins. Why would He then bring all their sins to the foreground again and accuse them of those sins once more?

*Answer:* They will not be accused of those sins, nor will those sins be brought to the foreground as being unforgiven. Rather, they will be presented as having been committed indeed, but also as having been atoned for by the Surety.

*Objection #2:* God has already forgiven all their sins; He remembers them no more. He has cast them behind His back into the depth of the sea. They are covered Ps 32:1, and thus they can no longer come to the fore.

*Answer:* “Not to remember” means “not to be punished,” “not to be treated as a sinner”—for with God there is no forgetfulness. To cover does not mean “to hide,” for God, the angels, other godly persons, and also the ungodly have seen them. Rather, it means that He does not punish them.

*Objection #3:* It would be to the grief and shame of the godly if all their sins would be held before them again.

*Answer:* They will indeed be willing to own that they have been such sinners, since this manifestation will be to the glory of God’s mercy and justice as well as of the satisfaction of Christ on their

behalf. Neither shame nor grief will be an issue, since they have been reconciled.

*Objection #4:* Only the good deeds will be mentioned in the judgment—and not the evil deeds. “For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me” (Matt 25:35-36).

*Answer:* These words neither belong to the judicial sentence nor to the examination, both of which are under discussion here. In pronouncing the sentence, the Judge will advance the fact that they have loved, have been redeemed by Christ, and have been believers (as being the reason and evidence that they are elect); for love is the fruit of faith Gal 5:6, and is evidence of the love of God toward them (1 John 4:19; 1 Cor 8:3). These deeds will not be mentioned as the meriting causes of salvation (for they receive heaven as an inheritance), but as a proof that they are partakers of the righteousness of Christ. Justification and sanctification are linked together and can never be separated from each other.

Fourthly, we are also to consider the sentence of the defendants in this judgment, which will be pronounced separately toward the godly and the ungodly. “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” Matt 25:34,41. The sentence upon the godly will first be pronounced in order to glorify them before the eyes of all the ungodly and to the increased grief and shame of the ungodly.

Fifthly, this will finally be followed by the execution of the sentence. The ungodly will be cast away into hell to be tormented there forever. Subsequent thereto, however, the godly will be ushered into the third heaven—the paradise of God—by the King, in order to have the eternal satisfaction of joy in immediate fellowship with God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt 25:46).

#### *Place, Time, and Duration of the Final Judgment*

*The place* where the judgment will be executed is not the valley of Jehoshaphat, as some of the Papists maintain by misinterpretation of the following text: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there. ... Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round

about” (Joel 3:2,12). In this text the reference is to an extraordinary deliverance of the people of God and to a specific judgment upon their enemies, similar to the special deliverance God gave to Israel and the judgment He executed upon the enemies at the time of Jehoshaphat. He praised the Lord for this and consequently called the place the “the valley of Berachah,” that is, the valley of praise (2 Chron 20:26). Instead, the place of the last judgment will be in the air—in the clouds. “They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt 24:30); “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17); “Behold, He cometh with clouds” (Rev 1:7).

*The time* when the final judgment will occur is the last day, upon which the world will perish immediately. However, how long it will be before this will occur is hidden from man. But we do know that this day will come suddenly and unexpectedly. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32); “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt 25:13); “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35); “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts 1:7). There have always been curious and bold individuals who have endeavored to calculate its time and have declared when the time will be. They have, however, been put to shame throughout history. There is still a Jewish fable which judges from the first verse of Genesis that the world will remain six thousand years since the Hebrew letter ) (*aleph*) is found *six* times in that verse, this being the first letter of Πλ) (*elep*), which means “thousand.” However, a faulty foundation results in a faulty building.

Even though the Lord has concealed the precise moment from us, He has nevertheless given us several signs in His Word which must precede Christ’s coming unto judgment. Some of these have already been fulfilled to a large extent, such as powerful delusion by way of many heresies and false prophets, apostasy, terrifying wars, earthquakes, floods, famines, dreadful persecution and oppression of the church, prevailing carelessness and ungodliness, the proclamation of the gospel throughout the entire world, and the revelation of the antichrist. There are yet matters, however, which are to be fulfilled prior to Christ’s coming to judgment. There must yet be the destruction of the city of Rome, the throne of the beast (Rev 16:13); the undressing, forsaking, and contemptuous rejection of the harlot of Babylon (Rev 17:16); the eradication

of her empire Rev 18; (Rev 19:2); the conversion of the entire Jewish nation to the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah (Rom 11:15); the glorious millennial state of the church upon earth; the rebellion of Gog and Magog which will follow this Rev 20, and the time when they will encompass the camp of the saints and oppress them in an extraordinary manner. It is then that the Lord Jesus will suddenly come to execute judgment. From these things we can deduce that the day of judgment is not that near as yet. This day is near for every individual person, however, and the day of judgment will find a man in the state in which he was at the time of his death. There is another sign which will accompany the coming of Christ, such as the sign of the Son of man which will then appear in heaven (Matt 24:30). No mention is made of the nature of the sign, and this can therefore not be determined at all. Some are of the opinion that it will be the coming of Christ Himself, others believe it to be the erection of His glorious throne Matt 25:31, others an extraordinary and glorious radiance, and again others believe it to be the great noise of the last trumpet. The superstitious papists believe that it will be a great and glorious cross. Whatever it may be, however, it will be something whereby the living will acknowledge and say, "Now the Judge is coming unto judgment, and the end is here."

*The duration* of this judgment is also unknown. From that which has been said it can indeed be deduced that it will neither be a silent proceeding, nor only last one or several hours, or even for a day, as some imagine. Instead, it may last a very long time, and were it to last—give or take—two thousand years, there will be no haste if this task were to require that much time. Believers will then be in glory and in a state of bliss already, and the ungodly will suffer anxiety which is so unbearable that they would wish that they could escape the presence of Christ. However, the duration of it is not to be determined.

#### *The Final Judgment to be Greatly Feared by the Ungodly*

Consider all the above collectively and bring it vividly to your attention. Christ will come to judgment; He will appear in a very conspicuous manner and every eye will see Him; He will come with great glory and as Judge to execute judgment; He will summon all men before Him and separate the good from the evil; He will examine everyone painstakingly and make all their deeds manifest; He will pronounce the sentence of life or death upon everyone's work. Thereupon He will execute the sentence and cast the ungodly into hell and usher the godly into heaven.

How this should cause the hair of the ungodly to stand on end for fear, for it will be a dreadful day for them! It is “that great and notable day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20). “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal 4:1). Then they will experience what is written: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Isa 33:14). Then they shall say “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:16-17). It is amazing that people who are so desirous to know future things and so careful to make provision for their own old age as well as for their children and grandchildren—and if possible gather treasures—are nevertheless so careless about this great and terrible day. Their conscience convinces them of sin, and if they would but give a little heed to their conscience, they would be fearful of wrath. This day makes no impression in the hearts of many, however; they neither wish to think of it nor reflect upon what it will be like. They ignore it, as if the likelihood of this day would be less if they do not think about it. The devils tremble for this day and Felix became very fearful when he heard Paul speak of the impending judgment. Who is, however, presently persuaded by the terror of the Lord to believe? It is a grievous sign when someone who lives in sin nevertheless does not tremble for this great judgment.

You who are careless, insensitive, comfortable in your sin, carnal, worldly-minded, of the earth earthy, immoral, fornicators, adulterers, proud boasters, gamblers, drunkards, liars, backbiters, hypocrites, and disobedient rejecters of the gospel—hear and take notice. How do you think you will fare? I assure you that you will be summoned to judgment just as you are. You will see the Lord Jesus in glory, sitting as your Judge upon the throne of His glory. The call will go out to you, “Adam, where art thou? What have you done?” You will then tremblingly appear, and there the history of your life, together with a review of all your private and public sins will be read to you. This will silence you and the Judge will look upon you in wrath, and in anger will address you as a cursed one. The godly will behold you with contempt and approve of your condemnation. All this you will have to endure for a long time with utmost anxiety. It will be unbearable to you that those

whom you now despise will then be in glory and will judge you. Upon this will follow the eternal casting away into the pool which burns with sulphur and where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There the smoke of your torment will arise to all eternity, and there the worm of your conscience, which will bite you furiously, will never die. There you will seek death but not find it, and in unbearable despair you will bite your tongue for grief. All this will come upon you. Where will you then flee? All grace will then be withheld from you; all hiding places will have been removed, and all refreshment, change of condition, and relief will then cease. Only your sorrows according to soul and body will have no end. Oh, that by the terror of the Lord we could persuade you and that we could save you through fear! Now the wrath of God can still be escaped, since Christ as the way, the truth, and the life is yet offered to you in the gospel. Therefore, repent now and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. May the almighty God now cause you to come tremblingly to the Lord and His goodness, so that you may stand in that day before the Son of man with great liberty and joy when He will come in His glory.

*The Final Judgment to be Joyously Anticipated by the Godly*

Believers, you who seek Jesus unto justification and sanctification, do not fear the coming of the Lord. Instead, long for it and anticipate it with great joy; love His appearing (2 Tim 4:8). “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8). Comfort each other with the promise of His coming 1 Thess 4:16-18, and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing nigh (Luke 21:28). Ought you not to do so?

First, our Lord Jesus will then be glorified before the eyes of all men, angels, and devils. He who has been humbled so deeply while upon earth; who then was a Man of sorrows, tempted in all miseries, and abhorred and despised by the people; who died upon the cross while experiencing the wrath of God and the mockery of the people; and who presently is so little acknowledged, revered, and feared wherever He is preached, but instead is contemptuously rejected by the world and is still mocked and persecuted in His members—that Jesus will then be seen in His glory, sitting on the throne of His glory as the Judge of all. Therefore, rejoice ye lovers of the Lord Jesus, and long for that day, for then your Jesus will be glorified in all His saints and “be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess 1:10).

Secondly, this day will be a day of great refreshment for you, for it will be the time of refreshing Acts 3:19, a day of deliverance

from all your misery Luke 21:28, a day of being received at the marriage feast Matt 25:6, and a day of crowning (2 Tim 4:8).

Thirdly, the good and the evil will then be separated from each other. Presently—to your grief—they are intermixed in the church, but then you will “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not” (Mal 3:18). All the godly will then stand as a single assembly together at the right hand of Christ. Not one ungodly person or hypocrite will be able to find a place among them. Rather, they will all be placed together at the left hand of the Judge.

Fourthly, you will then observe the execution of righteous wrath upon all the ungodly and the oppressors of the church. Then He will come, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:8).

Fifthly, He will then confess before the angels and all men that He loves you, that, as your Surety, He has atoned for all your sins, and that you are an heir of eternal life. Oh, how great will your glory then be when you will be acknowledged by that great Judge as His bride, and when He will usher you into the house of His Father where there will be nothing but light, glory, holiness, and joy! Therefore, lift up your head out of all your sorrows and rejoice. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:6-7).

#### *Believers Rebuked and Exhorted*

It is a deplorable situation that believers rejoice so little over the coming of Christ unto judgment and are unable to comfort themselves with this in their current spiritual and temporal tribulations. If you ask what the reason for this is, then I answer:

(1) It proceeds from a misconception that it would be more glorious for the Lord Jesus, the church, and you if it were to occur presently in this life, as if it would not be such a great thing in the day of judgment.

(2) It proceeds from unbelief, because you fear that you are not a child of God and that you would yet find yourself at the left hand. Oh, why this continual doubting about one’s state, since there are so many reasons to acknowledge grace? It is so harmful if the believer, in essence believing that he has been translated from death and is a possessor of life, nevertheless does not function as being in this state and as being an heir with Christ, and does not rejoice in this.

(3) It proceeds from the weakness of historical faith. One secretly believes that the Lord Jesus will come to judgment. If, however, historical faith were stronger, you would focus upon this day and deem it to be a present reality. You would then be conscious of the principle from which your present motions would proceed.

(4) It proceeds from carelessness. In your mind you remain too attached to the earthly and, with Peter, you would wish to erect tabernacles here to find pleasure for soul and body. Therefore, you reflect so little about the future—as if that were not desirable. If you do not reflect much upon that great and glorious day, nor deem this to be to your comfort, joy, and glory; if you do not comfort others with those words, then it is no wonder that you neither have high thoughts of it nor much desire for it.

(5) It proceeds from a lack of love for Christ. If you had more of a desire for Christ's glory, and if you were more desirous of seeing Jesus in His glory and to be with your Bridegroom, your heart would reflect more upon it and long more for it.

Since the Lord Jesus will come to judgment:

(1) Review your account, examine your debts, and place the satisfaction of Christ over against it. Endeavor by faith to have this account signed with the blood of the Lord Jesus.

(2) Adorn yourself for such a time with the glorious wedding garment—the righteousness of the Lord Jesus—so that you, being clothed with the garments of salvation and having put on the robe of righteousness, may see yourself as perfect in Him, as the righteousness of God, and thus anticipate that day with liberty.

(3) Be watchful, so that this day may not come upon you unawares. Furnish your lamps with oil, keep your loins girded and your candle burning Luke 12:35, and prayerfully anticipate the coming of the Bridegroom: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36). You must now work and be abundant in the exercise of virtue: “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Matt 24:46). You must now be doing, if you then wish to hear: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me” (Matt 25:34-36).

### *The End of the World*

Once the ungodly will have been incarcerated in hell forever

and the Judge will have entered heaven with His elect, *the world shall perish*. At the time of Noah, the first world, after having existed approximately 1656 years, did perish by water—the history of which has been recorded in Gen 6-8. The Lord has promised and sworn that the world will no more perish by water, and, as a confirmation, has appointed the rainbow to be the sign thereof (cf. Gen 8:21-22; Gen 9:9-17; Isa 54:9). Even though the world will no more perish by water, it will perish once more with all that is in it. “Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed” (Ps 102:25-26). The heavens and the earth will perish by fire. “But the heavens and the earth ... are ... reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men ... in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” 2 Pet 3:7,10,12.

*Heaven and Earth to be Purged and Restored Rather than Annihilated*

*Question:* Will the structural edifice of heaven and earth be annihilated, or will they be purified by fire and be restored to their original purity, beauty, and glory?

*Answer:* There are differences of opinion about this. Some maintain the first, and some the second. It is not a point worthy of dispute. We are of the opinion that the heavens and the earth will be purified and be restored in their original luster. The reasons are as follows:

*Proof #1:* “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). This time is none other than the coming of Christ to judgment. Prior to that day we do not expect Christ from heaven. In the millennium all things will not be restituted. Corruption and sin will remain as long as the world stands. This time of Christ’s coming unto judgment is called “the times of restitution of all things.” “All things” does not refer to people; rather, as we have observed earlier from Peter’s epistle, heaven and earth and all that is in it will, according to the apostle, be fully restored. They will thus continue as far as their substance is concerned and will only be changed as far as their characteristics are concerned.

*Proof #2:* “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for

the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:19-23). The “creature” and “the whole creation” cannot refer to believers, and much less to the apostles being contrasted with other believers. For not only did the apostles have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but also all believers have it, and they are all “firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). That “creation” and “creature” are not to be understood to refer to believers is evident as follows:

(1) There is a distinct contrast between creature and believers, for the creature anticipates the revelation of the children of God. The creature is not subject to vanity due to his own doings and to inherent guilt, but that of another, namely, the guilt of man—for which reason God has cursed the earth (Gen 3:17; Gen 5:29). Believers, together with all men, are subject to vanity due to their own doings. We repeat Rom 8:23: “And not only they, but ourselves also.” Thus, there is an immediate contrast between the creature and believers. Believers are therefore not the creature, nor were the apostles, for the apostles were also subject to vanity—not due to the guilt of believers, but, as is true for all believers, due to their own guilt.

(2) Neither the apostles nor believers are ever referred to as “the creature” or as “the whole creation”; but every believer is indeed called a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). However, this pertains to themselves; that is, relative to who they were previously, for nowhere are they in themselves, or in comparison to others, denominated as either *the creature*, or “the whole creation.” Others are, however, called creatures in contrast to believers. “... that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18; cf. Mark 13:19; Rom 8:39; Heb 4:13). Thus, creature or creation does not refer to believers but to the edifice of heaven and earth. This creation, contrary to its nature, is subject to vanity and must be subservient to sinful man. This creation will be delivered from bondage. Of this creation it is said (figuratively speaking) that it groans and hopes (as it is said to rejoice and clap hands), to be freed and restored to liberty, consistent with its mode of existence—just as the children of God will then be placed in glorious liberty.

Therefore, the substance of heaven and earth will not be destroyed, but will remain.

Thirdly, “They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed” (Heb 1:11-12). That which waxes old, is folded up, and is changed continues to exist in essence. Furthermore, perishing also does not mean annihilation, but rather a change in state and characteristics. We thus say that people perish when they drown in the sea. Likewise the apostle Peter did say that the first world perished, whereas it nevertheless remained as far as its substance was concerned.

Fourthly, “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now ... reserved unto fire ... shall pass away with a great noise ... shall be burned up ... be dissolved ... melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” 2 (Pet 3:6-7,10-13); “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Rev 21:1).

(1) All these expressions are indicative of a wondrous change, but not of annihilation. All that perishes, burns, and melts in the world, remains the same as far as substance is concerned. Its condition and characteristics are changed. It is dissolved into its elements, but it is not annihilated as far as substance is concerned. From these expressions one can therefore not conclude that heaven and earth will be annihilated.

(2) The first world perished, but was not annihilated. After the world perishes, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We know, however, that whatever is renewed is also said to be new (John 13:34; Gal 6:15). There will be a new heaven and a new earth; this cannot be denied. How will this take place? Will this be by way of a new creation? Such a statement is not found in the Bible. Thus, the heaven and earth which now exist will remain as far as substance is concerned and be renewed as far as condition and characteristics are concerned. Only as far as the sea is concerned do we read a different expression: It will *be no more*. Whether this refers to substance or characteristics, we shall leave unanswered. Whatever may be advanced contrary to that are but figures of speech which have been mentioned before, and upon which we have commented.

Man in his curiosity asks many questions about this, such as, “Shall God create new persons, animals, trees, etc. Will those persons fare better than Adam did and not sin, since it is stated

that righteousness will dwell in that earth? Will there be animals? Will death among animals and vegetation also take place there? Will animals procreate?" etc. We have no desire to answer these and similar foolish questions. It is certain that the continuation of heaven and earth will not be purposeless. They will exist to the glory of the Creator, and for angels and men who may possibly (due to the mobility of their bodies) be able to travel from heaven to earth and from the earth to heaven. As angels currently do not miss heaven when they are upon earth, so will glorified believers also not miss heaven and communion with God if they were to come upon earth to observe the works of God there. They would thereby be able to glorify God as the angels did when God created heaven and earth Job 38.

We ought to aspire to be an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ—to be quickened to a godly walk by the hope of inheritance, and leave the earth with all that is in it for the ungodly as their portion. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” 1 (John 2:15,17); “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet 3:11-12).

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CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED-THREE

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Concerning Eternal Glory

*The Blessed Portion of the Elect*

Upon completion of the judgment and the casting of the ungodly into hell, the Lord Jesus will usher the elect into eternal glory Ps 73:24, the Father's house in which there are many mansions John 14:2, the house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens 2 Cor 5:1, the third heaven, paradise 2 Cor 12:2,4, the city which has foundations and whose builder and maker is God Heb 11:10, the joy of the Lord Matt 25:21, and the heavenly kingdom (2 Tim 4:18). He will give them eternal life John 10:28, place the crown of righteousness upon their head 2 Tim 4:8, grant them the crown of life James 1:12, and make them partakers of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet 1:4). Furthermore, they will enjoy that which the Lord Jesus has merited and petitioned for them: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:24).

God Himself who alone is omnipotent, wise, and merciful, has built the third heaven Heb 11:10, and has prepared this kingdom from the foundation of the world for His blessed ones (Matt 25:34). He has chosen them from the beginning unto salvation 2 Thess 2:13, He has sent His Son into the world to save His people Matt 1:21, and it is His pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32). "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom 11:36). The Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has earned and merited salvation for the elect. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23),

who is "... the captain of their salvation" Heb 2:10, who "is able also to save them to the uttermost" Heb 7:25, and has said, "I lay down My life for the sheep ... and I give unto them eternal life" John 10:15,28. Therefore, He bears the title *Savior*, for man contributes nothing to salvation; he is led to and subsequently ushered into it. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps 100:3). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim 1:9). Therefore, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Ps 115:1).

The elect, they who are foreordained, are those who will become partakers of salvation: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also ... glorified" (Rom 8:30); they are the blessed of the Father: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matt 25:34); they are those who have been given to Christ by the Father: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24); and they are believers: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). They alone, and they all, are the persons who will enjoy felicity.

### *The Godly Will Differ in Glory in Heaven*

*Question:* In heaven, will one person have a greater measure of glory than another?

*Answer:* Some think this will not be the case, whereas others believe that there are various degrees. We maintain that all they who are glorified will be filled with felicity to overflowing; that is, as much as they can endure. Thus, there neither will be a desire for more, nor will this be possible. It will be impossible to be deprived of anything there. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Ps 17:15). As one vessel can, however, contain more than another vessel, while yet all being full, we believe that also the one will excel the other in glory. This is, however, not due to merit. The papists maintain this when they say that virgins, monks, ministers, and martyrs who excel in merit here, will also stand out there. Rather, on the basis of His free grace, God will elevate in glory those who have done or suffered much as a witness for His Name. This is evident in the following passages:

First, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars

for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3). In verse 2 the prophet relates what all believers will be equal partakers of: eternal life. Subsequently, in verse 3, a distinction is made between ministers and those who have been instrumental in the conversion of many. They especially will shine forth as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars.

Secondly, “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:41-42). The apostle not only indicates that the same bodies will have different characteristics, but also that these characteristics will differ in individual persons—the one will be more glorious than the other. There is a difference between the luster of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and also the stars among themselves differ in luster.

Thirdly, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6). This promise does not pertain to this life, for this does not always occur. Rather, it pertains to eternal life, which is confirmed from Gal 6:8 where the apostle states: “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” The word “sparingly” is contrasted with “bountifully.” It is not indicative of a lack, but rather of a difference of degree.

Fourthly, consider (Luke 19:12-19). “And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come” vs. 13; “Have thou authority over ten cities” vs. 17; “Be thou also over five cities” vs. 19. Not only is the reward of the faithful servants recounted, and the fact that there is a reward in a general sense (as is the case in Matt 25:21,23), but also the measure of reward given in accordance with each person’s profit. This is figuratively expressed by having authority over either ten or five cities.

Fifthly, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Cor 3:8). We neither have a contrast here between the faithful and the unfaithful, and between the good and the evil, nor is it said of them that the good are to be rewarded and the evil punished. Rather, the apostle only speaks of faithful servants—of Paul and Apollos—and relates the task of each person. It is the one who plants and the other who waters—even though the planting of a church in a given locality requires more work than the administering of that which is subservient to her growth. He declares that they both are indeed unable to facilitate its growth, but nevertheless, each one would be rewarded according to whether his work was of greater or lesser importance.

Sixthly, “Many ... shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11); “And it came to pass,

that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22); "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). The reference here is to heaven, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do not belong to the church here on earth. Lazarus enjoyed sitting down with Abraham after he had died and the apostles would sit upon the twelve thrones when Christ would sit upon the throne of His glory. Following this time state there would be a difference between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the many who would sit down with them; between Abraham and Lazarus; and between the apostles and other believers—namely, that the apostles would sit upon the twelve thrones, which is not said about others in this text. From this it is evident that there will be a difference in degree in the measure of glory.

*Objection #1:* "So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny" (Matt 20:8-10). Equal wages were given to those who had labored much or little, and thus there are no degrees in heaven.

*Answer* (1) The objective here is to show that the reward is not meritorious, but rather is given out of free grace.

(2) The penny is not to be understood as referring to eternal life, for there will be no one there who has an evil eye and who murmurs.

*Objection #2:* All believers are equal partakers of the same election, satisfaction of Christ, justification, adoption of children, and designation as heirs. Thus, they are also equal partakers of glorification. This proves that there are no degrees in glorification.

*Answer:* This argument is futile, for by way of the same argument we could conclude that believers are all equal partakers in sanctification. Experience and Scripture both teach that this is not so, but that in this life there are fathers in Christ, young men, and children. Just as there are degrees in this life in regard to grace and its outworking, so likewise in the reward. The least of them will, however, be filled to overflowing and eternally enjoy as much glory and felicity as he is able to contain. This must nevertheless motivate us to do and suffer much for Christ.

#### *The Saints Will Recognize Each Other in Heaven*

*Question:* Will there be mutual recognition in heaven?

*Answer:* Even though such knowledge will not be what it is here

(it being associated with a physical relationship and affections), we nevertheless believe that ministers will know their members, members their minister, the husband his wife, the wife her husband, parents their children, and children their parents. Relatives and acquaintances will know each other. Furthermore, all men of renown in the Bible, and all who excel in glory will be known by all. All who are in heaven will mutually know each other by divine revelation and through the eternal fellowship they will have with each other. No one will be a stranger to each other or be considered as such by anyone, for there will be no loss of memory. Ignorance is a weakness, and there will be no imperfection. Mutual fellowship will be perfect there; it will not be engaged in ignorantly, but knowledgeably. I believe that they shall recount to each other the ways in which the Lord had led them. They shall then praise and magnify the perfections of God which manifested themselves at each step of the way. They shall thus not be occupied with the immediate beholding of God only, without thinking of each other. Rather, as glorified men they shall fellowship together, unitedly glorifying God. The disciples knew Moses and Elijah when they were on the holy mountain (Matt 17:3). The poor will know their benefactors when “they may receive you into everlasting habitations” (Luke 16:9). The absence of relatives will not engender sorrow since all physical relationships and affections cease there. The righteousness of God will give as much reason for joy and rendering of glory to God as His goodness.

That they shall have the ability to speak is evident from the fact that inability to speak is an imperfection. How else would they be able to sing praises? Moses and Elijah spoke with Christ, its purpose being to render glory to God. We believe, however, that the difference between languages will cease, this being a consequence of sin. However, which language will be spoken there is not known. It may possibly be the language that Adam spoke, which up to the moment when the languages were confused (a period of nearly two thousand years) was the only language—the Hebrew language. Perhaps it will be a language enabling the saints to express the essence of heavenly matters better than any earthly language, which is generally derived from temporal matters. Whatever the language will be, however, it will be to the glorification of God.

#### *The Essential Elements of the Glory of God's Children*

We shall now consider the matter itself; that is, that which constitutes the glory of God's children. This glory is very great, as is confirmed first of all by its inexpressible nature. Anyone who

receives but a glimpse and tastes but a little of this will be dumbfounded and his pen will stop, for he will not be able to find words to express it. He will be ashamed about the expressions he makes concerning it, as they do not correspond to the matter itself. When David wishes to give expression to this, all he is able to say is: “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” (Ps 31:19). If anyone should be able to tell us something about this, it ought to be Paul, for he was drawn into the third heaven. All he could say about it, however, was that he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” 2 Cor 12:4—thus, unspeakable matters. And even if someone were able to express the matter somewhat more particularly, no one would be able to understand it unless he were of a more heavenly disposition. The inexpressible and incomprehensible nature of this glory ought not to cause us to think less of salvation, but ought to stir us up to think of greater glory. Nevertheless, the Lord has revealed that much of heaven in His Word, and made it known to the souls of His children, that they may know enough of heaven to enable them to endure all tribulations and heartily desire to be a partaker of that salvation.

Secondly, that which the only wise and omnipotent God has conceived and thought out within Himself (let me speak as a man), namely, to exalt man to the highest level of felicity, fill him with incomprehensible glory and delight, and glorify Himself in His saints and be admired in all them that believe 2 Thess 1:10, must be glorious to the highest degree. Therefore God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, is called *the Builder and Maker of heaven*. “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:10).

Thirdly, this is to be deduced from the fact that they whom God leads unto salvation are His children. One reserves his very best for his children. Men of renown provide great inheritances for their children. Would that which the great God has prepared for His beloved children not be most eminent? “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17).

Fourthly, this is evident when considering that the means whereby this salvation was procured for them is of inestimable worth; it is the precious blood of Christ, the Son of God. The Son of God would not have suffered that much to provide man with only a small measure of happiness. Therefore, how great is that salvation which has been purchased at such a high price! “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,

in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10).

Fifthly, it ought to be considered furthermore that when God wishes to promise His children the very greatest blessing, He promises them eternal life. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. ... He ... shall not be hurt of the second death. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev 2:7,11,17); “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, ... and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God ... to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne” (Rev 3:5,12,21); “He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (Rev 21:7).

Sixthly, salvation constitutes the entire hope and comfort of believers. This has enabled them to endure all manner of torment and cruel deaths. For this salvation they have longed with great yearning. “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26); “... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil 1:23).

From all this it can readily be concluded that future felicity will be inexpressibly great. Would you not dare to put all your trust in this, believers? Would you not joyously forsake all that is of the world, endure all suffering, and courageously engage in all battles in return for this—even if all that you could perceive of it is no more than what you can deduce by way of conclusion? Surely, if faith were but lively, you would have sufficient reason to long for this.

### *The Experience of Felicity*

I can understand that the godly reader is desirous to hear a bit more concerning the state of felicity, expecting more particulars concerning this matter to follow. I must tell you, however, that I shall not be able to satisfy your desire and expectation. You are not interested in words, but in the matter itself, and this I cannot give you. Human words are not able to express the inexpressible. Nevertheless, I wish to mention some things. May it please the Lord to make it an occasion for someone to get the matter itself in view and begin to taste it. First we shall say what will not be there, and then what will be experienced there, both according to body and soul.

There will be nothing of all that which causes either body or soul

any discomfort or unrest in this life. No darkness will stupefy the mind and no sinfulness will pollute the soul. Souls will no longer be deserted, and there will no longer be any battle against the flesh, the world, and the devil. All sorrow, grief, heartache, anxiety and fear will have been eliminated. There will be no poverty, opposition, oppression, pain, hunger, or anything else that would grieve soul and body. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4); “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” (Rev 7:16).

Instead of misery, there will be everything that can satisfy the soul and the body. The body will be clothed with glory and “be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil 3:21). Furthermore, since the body will have perfect vision and hearing, nothing will be lacking to render a man happy. Everything will be present there and will be subservient to the glory of God. However, what the eye and ear will see and hear is hidden from us. In general we can say that whatever will be seen and heard there will be wondrous, joyous, and enrapturing.

Heaven, as a locality, is inexpressibly great and filled with divine glory. It is described for us in a figurative sense in Rev 21, and is there compared to the most eminent circumstances that can be construed upon earth. “And the city lieth foursquare. ... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” Rev 21:16,21,23.

Fellowship there will be very conducive to promotion of joy. “I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zech 3:7). All the saints (each in his own glory, delightfulness, and loveliness); all the godly from Adam until the day of Christ; all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; and all the martyrs and those who have heroically fought for the truth, will have fellowship with each other, speak together, and together will praise the name of the Lord. “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 7:10-12).

*The Quintessence of Felicity: To Be in the Presence of God and Enjoy His Fellowship*

The foregoing can, however, not ultimately satisfy the soul which has an infinite desire, and which cannot find fulfillment in anything else but the enjoyment of the infinite. It is thus necessary to lead the soul to a higher plane.

First, there believers will *be forever* with the Lord. It is their grief in this life that they live so far from the Lord. This costs them many a tear. All their desire, yearning, and delight is focused upon communion with God. “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee. ... But it is good for me to draw near to God” Ps 73:23,28. However, communion there will be both immediate and eternal. This renders them comfort in this life: “So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess 4:17-18). This was Paul’s desire: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil 1:23). This is the promise made by our faithful Jesus: “... and where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). This was His petition: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am” (John 17:24). We are given a view of this: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Rev 7:15). Oh, how sweet it shall be to sit eternally under the shadow of the almighty, good, loving, all-sufficient, and benevolent God!

Secondly, felicity consists in *seeing God*. God cannot be seen with physical eyes, for He is the *invisible One* (cf. 1 Tim 6:16; Heb 11:27). The Lord Jesus, according to the body, will, however, be seen with physical eyes with overwhelming joy and love by all the citizens of heaven. Since the fullness of the Godhead will dwell bodily and visibly in Him, the nature of this will be such that the reflection of divine glory will be seen in Him. Believers will see Jesus in His glory, and they will speak with Him and He will speak with them face to face. God, however, will be seen with the enlightened eyes of the understanding. Presently, the believer sees God only from afar and sees but a small ray, seeing it but for a fleeting moment. This yields a wondrous joy to the soul; however, *it is but a rare moment of brief duration*.<sup>14</sup> It readily disappears and leaves behind a strong desire intermixed with sorrow in those who have seen and tasted something of this. Time and again they must say,

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<sup>14</sup> The Dutch phrase reads as follows: “Is een zelden uur van eenen korten duur.”

“Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?” (Ps 10:1); “How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?” (Ps 13:1); “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” (Ps 101:2); “Show me Thy glory” (Exod 33:18). Then it shall be as the sun in its clearest light at dawn. “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor 13:12); “I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Ps 17:15). David said of it, “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11). When God in an immediate and immanent manner—in a manner which God presently has not made known to us—will reveal His glorious perfections to His children, will cause the soul to experience that He is her portion, and cause her to taste the gratifying efficacy of this, only then shall they know what it means to see God’s friendly, glorious, loving, holy, gladdening, and satisfying countenance.

Thirdly, such a life by way of beholding will neither consist nor end in mere reflection, but it will be accompanied by the enjoyment of mutual and perfect *love*. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). This infinite love will encompass and fill the soul, and as the soul experiences the warmth and sweetness of this divine love, it will respond to God in reciprocal love. In the enjoyment of this mutual love it will enjoy an incomprehensible sweetness and joy which will satisfy it forever. “Charity never faileth” (1 Cor 13:8).

Fourthly, perfect love is *perfect holiness*. Since the mind beholds God in perfection, and the will enjoys God in perfect love and immediate union, there can be no room for imperfection. “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor 13:10). There the image of God will be perfect in everyone. “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Ps 17:15). There they will be partakers of the divine nature perfectly (2 Pet 1:4). Everyone will shine forth in holy luster as the sun, moon, and stars. This perfection will manifest itself in all the fellowship with the glorified saints, who will be united in perfect love.

Fifthly, there will only be *joy and bliss*. “Enter Thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt 25:21). When the soul may behold God perfectly and be surrounded by the glory of the Lord, walk forever in the light of His countenance; when God will fill the soul with His all-sufficiency, encompass it with His love, and overshadow it with all His perfections—how can it be any different but that the soul will delight itself in a “peace which passeth all understanding,” in adoration which will bring the soul into ecstasy, and in an inexpressible

joy, and thus lose herself entirely in God. Oh, how wondrous it will be when, together with all the angels and the elect, they may reverently bow before the Lord and jubilate forever with them the eternal *hallelujah!*

Sixthly, bring to mind all that you have ever beheld of God: all the joy and peace you have ever tasted, all the union and communion with God you have ever enjoyed, and all the being lifted heavenward you have ever experienced. Then add thereto all the enrapturing sermons you have ever heard, all that others have shared with you of their experiences, and all the love you have ever perceived in a gathering of saints. Consider all this collectively and then compare these minute rays of light to the joy and bliss that will be enjoyed in the state of perfection. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). That which will enhance all this blessedness even more is that there will neither be fear of losing it nor of its termination—for no one will disturb it, assault it, or remove it. Instead, it will endure to all eternity. This life is “eternal life” John 10:28, an “eternal inheritance” Heb 9:15, “eternal glory” 1 Pet 5:10, “the everlasting kingdom” 2 Pet 1:11, and it is “eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1).

*The Unconverted Exhorted to Strive to Become Partakers of This Glory*

Such glory and bliss is laid away for believers. Therefore, you who are unconverted, strive for that faith in Christ in order that you also may become a partaker of that salvation and may flee the eternal perdition which otherwise awaits you. It is presently offered to you, and therefore, take hold of it before it is too late. If you are not willing, then be no longer amazed about the strife and the tribulation the godly have to endure, as well as everything else they are engaged in. No longer think that it is but illusion, obstinacy, and stubbornness. Consider rather that they are acquainted with this glory, delight in it, and that they strive to receive that crown.

*Believers Exhorted to Conduct Themselves in Anticipation of Such an Inheritance*

And you believers, who may anticipate so great a salvation, conduct yourself as heirs of the same.

First, deem all things of this world as too insignificant and transitory than that you would concern yourself with it. Do not set your heart on prosperity, riches, honor, and entertainment. They are not worthy of mention in comparison with this inheritance. Turn away from them and do not permit them to hinder you as you

pursue this crown. If you encounter adversity, oppression, persecution, death for the name of Christ, poverty, or whatever else it may be, be not too troubled by it, for in comparison to this inheritance it amounts to nothing. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). Yes, suffering prepares us for a greater degree of glory—that is, if one bears it well. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17). Rather, rejoice in tribulation instead of succumbing to it in discouragement. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him” (James 1:12). In place of the cross the Lord will grant you abundant and eternal comforts. Observe this in (Rev 7:13-17). As this was the last text my deceased father preached upon, I shall quote it in its entirety: “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Secondly, if you may anticipate so great a salvation, then rejoice in this future inheritance. “Rejoicing in hope” (Rom 12:12). Many believers have the deficiency that they focus too much upon the present. They would like to fare a bit better in this world, for this would then yield a somewhat more quiet life for them. At another time they are only concerned about the state of their soul, considering whether they are in the state of grace. Time and again they insist on examining themselves and repeatedly must be able to conclude that they are in a state of grace. Then they insist that they ought to have more sensible grace and more power to resist sin. In the meanwhile time passes on, and they do not lift up their heart enough to anticipate the great glory they may look forward to. They have but a few fleeting thoughts about it. Instead, one ought to be occupied in reflecting upon eternity, and upon the certainty and reality of this your inheritance. One ought to focus continually upon the glory of this inheritance, and by faith traverse heaven,

beholding how gloriously the Lord Jesus manifests Himself; how the angels bow before Him; in what intimate manner He deals with the glorified saints; what light and immediate fellowship with God they enjoy; how they are moved and filled with a magnificent happiness toward God, Christ, the angels, and each other; how sweetly they may sing the praises of the Lord; and how they may adore and lose themselves in the perfections of God and the perfection of their state! We would then forget ourselves and, so to speak, find ourselves among the glorified multitude. With them we would bow ourselves before the Lord and glorify Him. In coming back to ourselves upon earth, we would then delight ourselves in bringing this glory to mind and we would go our way with joy, not stumbling over every spiritual difficulty. We would then be as someone who departs to take possession of a very great inheritance, and who, presently being poor and destitute, will endure a difficult day of travel. Therefore, I say again, “Rejoice in the hope of glory.” “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom 15:13).

Thirdly, cause this glory to be the only goal you pursue. The goal motivates the worker, and the more vehemently he delights in it, the more seriously he will apply himself to his work. Therefore, do not pursue any worldly goals, and do not seek anything here in which you might find your rest. Do not take it so seriously if you must be deprived of what you would desire to have, or if your soul does not prosper according to your wishes. This is not the season to be drawn into the third heaven with Paul. Now is the season of warfare and of tribulation. Therefore, look ahead and only have this glory in view. Depart neither to the right nor to the left side, and do not become inactive. Rather, let this glory be your goal, and pursue it so that you may enter heaven while being in a full run. Paul thus holds himself up as an example: “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

You must do what our Lord Jesus did. Of Him the apostle writes: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Moses did likewise when “he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb 11:26). Therefore, keep heaven in view and “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called” (1 Tim 6:12); “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24).

Fourthly, by way of anticipating this glory, stir yourself up to live a holy and heaven-oriented life. In this world conduct yourself as a stranger who is travelling to his homeland Heb 11:9-10,13-16, and lift yourself continually above the things of this earth so that you may presently live for the invisible, have your conversation in heaven, purify yourself, and lead a heaven-oriented life. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:17-18); “For our conversation is in heaven” (Phil 3:20). He who may have such a lively expectation of glory, holding this before him, will be motivated by that hope to prepare himself for this. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

Believers, you may therefore anticipate that such glory will shortly be your portion. Thus, hasten to complete your task, and be an example of godliness, faith, and courage; and hope upon glory. Make this glory, and the way which leads to it, known to others and lead them along unto felicity, so that you may join the Lord Jesus in saying, “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do ... I have manifested Thy name unto ... men. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me!” (John 17:4-6). *HALLELUJAH!*

APPENDIX

*The Administration of the Covenant of Grace in the Old and New Testaments*

*“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.”—Gen 4:3-5*

*“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”—Heb 9:8-12*

*“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”—Rev 1:3*

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CHAPTER ONE

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The Church of the Old Testament from Adam to Abraham

Thus far we have given a comprehensive presentation of both the nature and the characteristics of the gracious work of man's redemption. We shall now proceed to consider the difference of the administration of this work prior and subsequent to the incarnation of Christ. The administration preceding the time of Christ is called the Old Covenant or Testament; after His incarnation it is referred to as the New Covenant or Testament. Since Scripture uses the words *ἁθήνη* (*berith*) and *διαθήκη* (*diatheke*), I have used the words "covenant" as well as "testament" to show that there is no basis for erroneous views which are propagated by making a distinction between them. The distinction between the manner in which the covenant of grace is administered in the Old and New Testaments is based upon the Word: "... ministers of the New Testament" 2 Cor 3:14 "... in the reading of the Old Testament" (2 Cor 3:14); "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" Heb 8:13 "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old" (Heb 8:13).

The Old Testament is an administration during which it was promised that the Surety and Savior would come. Thus, the time from Adam to Christ was the age of promise, wherein the Savior was typified in His natures, suffering, and death—the purpose being that the people of Israel would be better acquainted with and believe in Him. This was accomplished by way of many sacrifices, which the apostle denominates as *figures*. They clearly depicted Christ; and thus the people, so to speak, with their physical eyes daily witnessed and beheld Christ in His suffering and death.

“Which was a figure *for the time then present*” Heb 9:9, Christ not having as yet become incarnate.

The writer of Hebrews also refers to these ceremonies as *types*. All types were constructed according to the divine prescription, precisely typifying the coming Christ. Thus, we do not define Christ according to the types, but the types are defined according to Christ; in the type, the people beheld the image of Christ who was to come. “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Heb 8:5).

The ceremonies were also referred to as *shadows*—not because their intent was to darken, conceal, and obscure the matter, but to depict the matter as clearly as possible, even though the matter itself could not yet be seen. This can be compared to a man standing on one side of a fence in the brightly shining sun, who is able to see the shadow of another man standing on the other side of the fence. He cannot see the person himself because the fence blocks his view. However, the shadow extending beyond the end of the fence can be observed by him. Furthermore, he is not only able to infer from this shadow that a human being is present whom he has not yet seen, but he can also observe whether this person is a child or an adult; and by way of the clothing he can determine whether it is a man or woman—yes, whether the person is moving or standing still, standing upright or bending over, and even what he might be doing. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were such shadows. “Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col 2:17). They are commonly referred to as ceremonies; however, this word is not to be found in the Bible.<sup>15</sup> Ceremonies are external exercises, accompanied with words or gestures. Since the term is not scriptural, we only wish to say that the term tends to incline the reader to either not understand or misunderstand the matters at hand. It is therefore better to use scriptural words. Such a practice we wish to adhere to.

#### *The Old Testament Administration of the Covenant of Grace Begins in Paradise*

The Old Testament or Covenant encompasses the entire period from the gospel declaration in Paradise until Christ. During this entire time frame there was no diversity in its manner of administration—an administration which functioned during this entire period by way of promises and figures. However, relative to the subjects of this administration, we can make a chronological distinction between

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<sup>15</sup> This is not true for the KJV, as the word “ceremonies” is found in Num 9:3.

the church *prior* to Abraham and *thereafter*. Prior to Abraham the church consisted of various nationalities—as is also true in the New Testament era. However, God took Abraham and his seed to be His church. Thus, subsequent to Abraham’s time, other nations rapidly became estranged from true religion. This pure religion was preserved, however, among the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, when speaking of a national covenant, it must be understood as the covenant of grace established with that particular nation. The term does not imply more than that.

Not much has been recorded concerning the condition of the church from Adam to Abraham. What has been recorded, however, is sufficient to show us that the gospel and true religion were as well-known and practiced then as was the case thereafter. It was by way of that generational line that the Lord Jesus descended from Adam. His descent from Adam was necessary in order to His being the Mediator. It was necessary that this be known in order to acknowledge Him as such. The time frame from Adam to Abraham encompasses about two thousand years and has been recorded in the first chapters of the first book of Moses. We shall briefly outline the most significant matters and then answer some questions.

After Adam and Eve had transgressed the covenant of works, the Lord announced a new covenant, a covenant of grace, with the following words: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15). This text has been expounded previously in this work. The words are few, but they encompass the great work of the redemption of the sinner; the overthrow of the devil’s tyranny over the elect; the enmity and warfare between God’s children and the children of the devil—and they point to the Person through whom this would be accomplished, who is called the *Seed of the Woman* (and thus not seed of the man). This Person is Christ—the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Mary—who through His death has destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14). God had expounded this matter more clearly to *Adam* and the holy men after him. Adam remained in the church for nine hundred thirty years. *Enoch* was a prophet who proclaimed the day of judgment Jude 14-15. *Noah* was a preacher of righteousness. The content of his preaching was Christ 1 Pet 3:19-21, and he prophesied concerning the calling of the Gentiles after the rejection of the seed of Shem (Gen 9:27). God also instructed and strengthened these believers by faith in the sacrifices of the fruits of the field, clean cattle, and of the firstborn (cf. Gen 4:4; Gen 8:20).

Hereby the people acquired knowledge concerning the mysteries of salvation and were led to believe in Christ. When Eve gave birth to Cain, her eye was upon Christ. She viewed his birth either as the beginning of the procreative process out of which Christ would be born, or she was in error concerning the person, thinking that he would be the Redeemer. For upon giving birth to *Seth*, she said, “For God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew” (Gen 4:25). She knew that God had rejected and cursed Cain and his descendants Gen 4:26, and believed that the Savior would be born out of *Seth*. *Abel* was a righteous man Matt 23:35 and a strong believer—and thus pleasing to God (Heb 11:5). *Enoch* walked with God and was taken away without seeing death, having this testimony that he pleased God (Heb 11:5). During the time of *Enos*, believers separated themselves from the ungodly, joined one another in fellowship, and called upon the name of the Lord (Gen 4:26).

Also then the church became corrupt, so that its members married unbelievers. By this the church became even more corrupt, and therefore God did not want His people to intermarry with other nations (cf. Dan 7:3; 2 Cor 6:14). The earth became increasingly corrupt. Contributing to this were the proud Lamech—the first man who had two wives and boasted of the sword of his son—and the fierce giants who relied upon their strength and reputation, ruled with violence, and made a name for themselves (Gen 6:4). Since the world and the church had become extremely ungodly, God caused all men with whatever moved upon the face of the earth to perish by means of the flood.

However, *Noah* and his wife, together with his three sons and their wives, as well as a representation of every living species, were preserved alive in the ark, by which they were saved. Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk—either because of his great desire for wine which he had not drunk in a long time, or because he had become unaccustomed to wine and was affected by it that much more quickly, or because the wine was stronger than the wine he had drunk previously. The fact is that at one time he became drunk and laid down to sleep. Due to stirring in his sleep, his covering was removed, and he lay there naked. When his son Ham entered the tent and saw his father’s nakedness, he went out and informed both his brothers. While approaching their father backward, they took a covering and spread it over him. Ham’s sin was not merely in the act of seeing, for if in moving about he had unexpectedly seen this and had quickly departed, he would not have sinned and brought such a curse upon himself. Rather, while seeing this, something occurred which amounted to mockery: Either Ham

went so far as to mock with his father, or his son Canaan, seeing his grandfather lying there naked, paused and mocked with him. In fact, the curse was not pronounced upon the person of Ham and his entire posterity, but upon his son Canaan. It could be that he had mocked, or that Ham was punished in his child—this being the severest punishment for a father. It could also be that they were both guilty, for Shem and Japheth received a blessing of their father, whereas Ham was passed by.

Ham's genealogy is placed side by side with those of Japheth and Shem. In this genealogy *Nimrod* is mentioned, of whom it is said, "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen 10:9a). This can be interpreted as a description of an ungodly man, being a terrible tyrant who cared neither for God nor man. It could also be a description of a God-fearing man, being desirous to provide a safe shelter for people—or more particularly, who killed and drove away the animals of prey for the benefit of his family. Wild animals had multiplied greatly and prevented people from living quietly and peacefully. Thus, it was not the timid hare or the quickly-frightened deer which he hunted, but rather lions, bears, tigers, wolves, and similar animals of prey. This required courage and, being accompanied with danger, caused him to flee to God for refuge, and with His help, overcame the wild beasts, thereby creating a safe residence for people.

These people, who intended to make a name for themselves by building a high tower and erecting a beacon to prevent their dispersion, were prevented in doing so by having their language confounded—and were thus dispersed over the entire face of the earth. These are the particulars of what has been recorded for us concerning the first two thousand years. Then Moses turns to Abraham, as the church was restricted thereafter to his family only.

#### *Six Rules to Be Observed in Determining Whether Something is a Type*

Prior to Christ's coming, men sought for the substance itself, longing and yearning for the fulfillment of the promises and shadows. Now that both the light and the substance have come, people look for shadows and types—rejoicing when they believe to have found a shadow. While in darkness, people sought for the light, and now that there is light, people look for darkness. This is deemed to be scholarship, and therefore everyone feels compelled to look for something new. The rule adhered to in such a pursuit is that there must be similarity in regard to name, issue, and circumstances. He who finds or constructs that, believes then to have found

a type. Before we discuss the types to be found during the time from Adam to Abraham, we shall first show what constitutes a type.

First, it is to be observed that, according to Paul's exhortation, a man must think soberly, and not think of himself more highly than he ought to think (Rom 12:3). In this matter one must conduct himself with fear and trembling, and assign no other meaning to the holy words of God than what God has expressed by them. By allegorizing nearly everything, and by fabricating as many prophecies and types as the mind can contrive, one will deprive the Word of its sanctity and spirituality.

Secondly, the similarity between names or their meanings, the congruency and analogy of certain matters, and the fact that the exegesis neither conflicts with the context of the text nor the rule of faith, are not rules by which types are established. The reasons for this are as follows:

(1) Where are such rules to be found in God's Word? If, however, one does establish his own rules, any exposition according to such self-made rules is no more than a fabrication of one's own mind. I reject these rules; let their validity be proven. Would it not be appropriate that irrefutable proof be rendered for a method used to interpret nearly the entire Bible?

(2) If one is to recognize a type by his own rules, then any type incompatible with those rules would be unacceptable—even if God Himself, with great clarity, has designated it to be a type.

(3) If one adopts his own rules, the entire Scripture can be distorted at will. Every grapevine, every tree, every foundation upon which a house is built, every kernel of grain, every door, every road and pathway, as well as the sun, the morning star, a lion, a hen, a worm (and very many other things) would be a type of Christ, for all these names are attributed to Him. There is some analogy and similarity between them and Christ; they are neither in conflict with the context of those texts nor do they contradict the regulative principle of faith. Thus it is readily perceived that to designate all these things as types would be foolishness—nevertheless, to do so would conform to such rules. This makes it very clear that these rules yield neither proof nor any foundation to designate a given matter to be a type.

One might say that the precise analogy between given matters is not accidental, it having been the intent of the omniscient and all-wise God to direct things in such a way that one thing would be a type of the other. I reply that the intent of a precise analogy is not to recognize a type. Were it so, nearly everything in the Bible could be designated as a type, and the entire Scripture could be

made into an allegory and be reduced to a number of comparisons. A painting can resemble a different person as well as he whom the painter had in mind. It could be that such persons either resemble each other, or that the painting, without this being the painter's intent, depicts certain features whereby it resembles the other person more than him of whom the painting was made. Would one conclude on the basis of this resemblance that it was the painter's intent to paint the other person? This is also the case here. Even though God knows what matters resemble each other, it has not been His intent that the one thing would be a depiction or type of the other. Also in the New Testament there are descriptions of many matters and people who have a semblance and are analogous to those of later date. Who would conclude on the basis of such similarities that matters spoken of in the New Testament are types of matters of some later date? Furthermore, things occur daily that resemble matters and people related to occurrences of one hundred or two hundred years ago. Also these are not outside of God's providence. Would one thus conclude that the former are types of the latter? It is therefore evident that something is a type not by virtue of analogy, but rather by divine appointment.

Thirdly, even the word *type* (or example) does not always signify a representation—a future depiction—exemplifying the Christ who would come. Rather, examples are also matters which, by way of application, are presented for the purpose of warning, emulation, or as an explanation, so that one may come to a clearer understanding of a given matter by way of analogy. This does not then say, that those matters which are used as examples were established for the purpose of predicting and depicting given events. Instead, they are used in retrospect by way of application.

(1) Consider an example which is given to us as a warning. “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Cor 10:6); “Now all these things happened to them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition” vs. 11; “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes ... making them an ensample (cf. Heb 8:5) unto those that after should live ungodly” (2 Pet 2:6). Obviously, these examples are not types of Christ, nor did they typify the time of the apostles. Instead, by way of application, they may in retrospect be used as a warning. This may and must occur in all ages.

(2) Consider an example given for emulation. “Brethren, be followers together of me ... as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil 3:17).

(3) Consider an example given with the intent to explain it by way of analogy. “... Adam ... who is the figure of Him that was to

come” (Rom 5:14). In this chapter Adam is presented as being the cause of death of all who are comprehended in him, that is, the entire human race; and Christ is presented as quickening all who are in Him, that is, the elect. It is beyond controversy that Adam, prior to the fall, did not depict Christ as the One who was to come, since there was as yet no sin which needed to be removed—the purpose of Christ’s coming. There was then no need of Him; therefore He had not been promised as yet. Also in his fall, Adam was no type of the Christ who would come to remove sin, for there was neither any covenant of grace revealed nor had Christ yet been promised and typified. Also after his fall, Adam was not presented to the Old Testament church as a type of Christ. Rather, it is very clear that all we have here is a comparison. The matter with which the apostle was dealing could be explained by way of analogy and contrast—that is, as Adam was the original and only cause of sin and condemnation, so Christ is the original and only cause of atonement for and the eternal felicity of the elect who had died in Adam. The same applies to Jer 33:20-26: “Thus saith the Lord; if ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night ... then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant,” etc. The permanent institution of day and night was not a type of the covenant with David, even though the covenant with David is compared to it. Rather, the institution of day and night serves as an analogy and an application in order to point out the immutability of the covenant with David.

Fourthly, whatever is a sign is not necessarily a type. All types are signs, but all signs are not types. The lying in the crib and the being wrapped in swaddling clothes were signs that this child was the Messiah (Luke 2:12); however, they were not types. The star which went before the wise men of the east and which remained stationary above the dwelling place (of Joseph and Mary) was a sign that the newborn King was present there; however, it was not a type. A type anticipates something in the future, whereas a sign points out a certain matter—past, present, or future—and unveils it to the understanding. In this sense the Lord Jesus established Jonah as a sign of His burial. “There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:39-40). Nowhere is Jonah either presented or designated to the Old Testament church as an example of Christ’s burial. Thus, they committed no sin if they neither perceived nor believed Jonah to be a type of His burial. Moreover, Christ did not say that Jonah was a type of Himself for

the church of the Old Testament. Instead, the Lord Jesus gave Jonah as a *sign* to the Jews of His time. Nowhere in the entire New Testament does this ever mean that whatever befell Jonah is typical of what would also befall Christ. Thus, what we have in these verses is an explanation of what would happen to Jesus—by way of analogy with Jonah—so that when it would come to pass, they would be convinced that He was the true Messiah.

Fifthly, in the New Testament both expressions and matters are transferred from the Old Testament by way of *allusion* in order to explain the matter at hand—however, without being types. Consider Rev 2:7 and 22:1-2, where the Lord Jesus is called *the Tree of Life*. The reference is, without a doubt, to the tree of life in Paradise, the sacrament of the covenant of works. It is, however, a certainty that Christ had not been presented to Adam; that there was no need for a Surety there; and that Christ was not the object of Adam's faith. Thus, the tree of life did not depict Christ to Adam. After the fall, Adam was no longer permitted to either see or touch the tree of life. This came to an end upon the breaking of the covenant of works, and subsequently this tree was never held before the Old Testament church as a type of Christ who was then promised. Never did the Old Testament church believe in Christ by means of the tree of life. Thus, by way of allusion and application, Christ is called the tree of life in the New Testament. As Adam saw this tree daily, ate of it, and thereby rejoiced in the promise of eternal life, likewise believers also use Christ, live in the enjoyment of Him, and will live and rejoice in Him. From all this we observe that one must not immediately designate something as a type if, in some measure, it is analogous and applicable to Christ.

Sixthly, consider attentively that God caused matters to transpire in the Old Testament with the intent that His wise and adorable providence would be observed afterwards, and that these matters would be applied allegorically. Thus, it is not only so that there would (or could) be an analogy between both, but God indeed intended it to be so. The apostle therefore presents Hagar and Sarah as having allegorical significance (Gal 4:24). The Greek word is  $\alpha$ )λληγορουμενα (*allegoroumena*). Hagar was not a type of the Old Testament, for as the Old Testament is designated a typical covenant, the one type would thus be a type of another. Even without such a supposition, Hagar would be a type of those types which are presented therein—which is a complete absurdity. Moreover, the apostle does not call her a type. Instead, he states that they are *allegoroumena*, which signifies matters which, by way of analogy, are transposed from one meaning to another. Thus, it

is permissible to transpose the meaning of many matters to other matters, even though it may not be possible to determine with unquestionable certainty that God had that meaning in mind with that given situation. Consequently, one can thus delight himself in the wise providence of God which, for example, can be observed in God's command to Abraham to offer his son Isaac upon Mount Moriah, the place where hundreds of years later the temple of Solomon was built and where sacrifices were made. One can do likewise in many other situations. One must, however, refrain from making types of them. I believe this is a solution to eliminate the differences of opinion concerning types.

*A Type Defined in the Strict Biblical Sense of the Word*

*A type is something ordained of God prior to the coming of Christ, to typify the Savior who was to come. Its purpose was to instruct His church during that time frame and lead her to faith in Christ.*

If one is to designate something as a type, the following must be true:

(1) *It must have been appointed by God to be a type*, for a type is an essential element of religion whereby the people of Israel were called to faith in Christ. However, their religion had to be utterly divorced from all will-worship and human precepts.

(2) Types had been given to the church of the Old Testament in order that during that time frame she would thereby look unto Christ and believe in Him. This is to be observed in Heb 9:9, "Which was a figure for the time then present."

(3) Since the types had been given to the church of the Old Testament for the practice of religion, all those who did not use these types for their intended purpose—to know and believe in the future Messiah—did sin.

Therefore, something is most certainly a type

(1) when one finds a person or matter designated as such in either the Old or New Testament;

(2) when such a person or matter had been revealed and given as such to the church of the Old Testament; and

(3) if one were guilty of sin because he failed to make use of this given type.

When these three criteria are absent, however, one may not appoint or designate something as a type. We believe that this will convince the conscience of all who esteem God's holy Word and delight in sound religion, making them to be careful in establishing and designating types.

From what has been said, it is evident that:

(1) *Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, etc.*, cannot be designated as types of the Lord Jesus, for there is neither evidence that they were appointed to be types, nor were they given as such to the Old Testament church—nor is there evidence that it was or would be a sin to the church if she were not to avail herself of these men as types.

(2) *The garments of Adam and Eve* may not be designated as types of the righteousness of Christ wherewith believers are clothed. Aside from the fact that no word is mentioned about this in God’s Word, the basis upon which one does so is improbable; namely, that these clothes were made from the skins of those animals which Adam had sacrificed. Adam was at that time still in Paradise, and when God dressed them with these clothes, which were a rebuke for their sins, He derided them, saying, “Behold, the man is become as one of Us” (Gen 3:22).

(3) For the identical reason, *the ark of Noah* is not a type of Christ. A similarity does not make something to be a type.

(4) The flood was neither a sacrament of the covenant of grace nor a type of holy baptism. Nowhere is it designated as such; the argument rests only on similarity.

*Objection:* The flood has been designated as a sacrament of the covenant of grace: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee” (Isa 54:9). Furthermore, holy baptism is identified as an antitype of the flood: “The like figure<sup>16</sup> whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet 3:21). The form for baptism speaks in like manner of the flood and the Red Sea, saying, “... by which baptism was signified.”

*Answer:* The text, Isa 54:9, does not speak of the actual flood as to the time and occasion of its occurrence. Rather, it speaks of something which transpired subsequently: the oath of God upon Noah’s sacrifice, that He would no more destroy the world by means of a flood. The flood is also not designated as either a sacrament or type—neither are the Jews commanded to designate and use it as such. Instead, God declares what the matter, which transpired after the flood, meant to Him: He would be as true to His promise that He would not be wroth with His church as He was true to the oath He swore after the flood. Israel could be as sure of this as they were of the fact that the world would not again be drowned.

The text, 1 Pet 3:21, does not establish the flood as a shadow or

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<sup>16</sup> The Statenvertaling uses the word “tegenbeeld,” that is, antitype.

type of baptism. For even though holy baptism and the Lord's Supper have come in the place of the Old Testament sacraments, these sacraments are not a type of the New Testament sacraments—and much less of the flood. Where is the flood designated as a type? Did it serve that purpose during that time frame? This would have to be proven; however, not a word about this is to be found. We have shown before that examples are also mentioned which did not typify anything. They are only presented by way of application, as a warning, or for the purpose of emulation or explanation. Thus, holy baptism is here designated as an antitype for the purpose of explanation; that is, as Noah was protected against the water by the water which raised the ark, likewise is baptism, which seals and assures believers of their atonement by the blood of Christ, a means unto their salvation. The form for baptism does not say that the flood is a type of baptism, but rather that baptism *is signified* thereby. We have already shown in a previous paragraph that an alternate meaning does not presuppose a covenant.

*The Rainbow is Not a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace*

*Question:* Is the rainbow a sacrament of the covenant of grace?

*Answer:* One might be inclined to think that this is so, since it is called the token of the covenant (cf. Gen 9:12-13). We answer negatively for the following reasons:

(1) It is a token of the covenant between God and the earth, all men (both good and evil), and all living animals which had been in the ark with Noah (cf. Gen 9:9-17). The covenant of grace is only a covenant between God and believers.

(2) By means of the rainbow, the Lord did not seal any spiritual benefits in Christ, but temporal blessings only; this blessing being that there would be no more flood upon the earth. The covenant of grace, however, contains spiritual promises.

(3) Since the covenant and the rainbow will remain until the end of the world, this would mean that we would have three New Testament sacraments. The first one would then be the rainbow—which is absurd.

(4) The word “covenant” does not always refer to a covenant in the actual sense of the word. It can also refer to an unchangeable promise or institution as in Jer 33:20: “If ye can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season.” The word “covenant” is here to be interpreted as an unchangeable promise and institution.

*Objection:* In Rev 4:3 we read there was a rainbow round about the throne upon which Christ sat. This causes us to reflect

upon the rainbow of the covenant established with Noah, indicating that this rainbow points to Christ.

*Answer* (1) This was a prophetic vision and must not be stretched beyond that.

(2) The rainbow reflected the radiance of Him who sat on the throne—just as the rays of the sun shining through water vapor upon a heavy cloud cause the rainbow. Even if it were to refer to Noah’s rainbow (which is not certain), it would be an indication of the immutability and certainty of the things which would be revealed to John—just as the rainbow gave assurance that there would be no reoccurrence of a global flood. There is no mention here whatsoever of the covenant of grace being sealed by the rainbow.

*The Old Testament Begins Neither at Mount Horeb nor Consists in the Inheritance of Canaan*

*Question:* Did the Old Testament begin with the first promise in Paradise, or did it begin at Mount Horeb, consisting in the inheritance of Canaan as a type of heaven?

*Answer:* Some distinguish between the time before Mount Horeb, referred to as the time of promise, and the time after Horeb, referred to as the Old Testament, but not a *covenant*, which they distinguish from a *testament*. The first period they designate as a period of freedom, the other as one being under the hard yoke of bondage. This latter period would neither consist in the holding forth of the promises of salvation through Christ, nor as being the covenant of grace, but would consist in the inheritance of Canaan.

We respond in the first place by saying that *Scripture does not make a distinction between covenant and testament*, since the one word (*berith*) is used in the Old Testament, and the word (*diatheke*) is used in the New Testament. Furthermore, Scripture makes no distinction between these matters. Even the very time period they exclusively want to be designated as the Old Testament is referred to as a covenant in Scripture, describing this era in such terms as cannot be applicable to a testament. “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers ... because they continued not in My covenant” (Heb 8:9). The heir cannot disannul the testament, but a member of a covenant can break a covenant. Their distinction between testament and covenant is due to the entire construction of their argument being founded upon that distinction. If one were to refer to it as a testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have to be assigned to the first time frame, called the time of promise. By assigning them to this testament, the period of the Old Testament could neither be designated as a period of hard bondage,

nor be limited to the inheritance of Canaan as being the substance of the Old Testament. They did not have Canaan in their possession as yet, but only the promise that their descendants would possess it. However, as we have shown in the appropriate place, the distinction between covenant and testament is unfounded.

Secondly, we maintain that *the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as a pledge of heaven*.

(1) God's Word states nowhere that Canaan is a pledge of heaven; this would have to be proven. It is indeed true that heaven is called a rest Heb 4:1 and that Canaan is also called a rest (Heb 3:18). However, one cannot designate something to be either a type or a pledge on the basis of name. It is not even Paul's objective to compare Canaan and heaven with each other. Rather, he admonishes to be diligent to enter heaven by faith, using as his motive the evil consequences for the unbelieving Israelites in the desert. They did not enter Canaan because of unbelief, provoking God to wrath—and are thus given as a warning example (1 Cor 10:11).

(2) If Canaan were a pledge of heaven, all ungodly Jews who lived in Canaan would have a pledge of heaven, and thus they would most certainly be saved—for to whomever God gives a pledge, He will most certainly also give the matter itself.

(3) Since the disputants claim that the Jews lived in the fear of missing Canaan, such ungodly Jews could not have lived in such fear of death if Canaan were indeed a pledge of heaven. One would readily and easily dispense with the pledge in exchange for the matter it represents, as the pledge cannot even be compared to it. Since Canaan is not a pledge of heaven, it follows that the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as being a pledge of heaven. The words "as a pledge" would then have to be left out and it would have to be said that the Old Testament consists in the inheritance of Canaan—as something of a physical nature, and thus end in that which is physical.

This point can also be verified as follows:

(1) God, by His very nature, cannot establish an external covenant, promising only temporal blessing upon outward obedience. We have dealt extensively with this in volume one, chapter 16. If God cannot enter into an external covenant with man, the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan.

(2) It is immaterial whether the Old Testament consists in either the promise of Canaan or in the possessing of it. If it consists in the promise, it did not begin at Mt. Horeb, but rather with Abraham who received the promise four hundred thirty years before

that. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would then also belong to the Old Testament—a fact the disputants deny.

(3) If the Old Testament consists in the possession of Canaan, it would not have begun at Mt. Horeb, but upon the entrance into Canaan—consequently, forty years later. How then will Israel’s presence in Babylon be explained? Were they outside of the Old Testament during that time?

We thus conclude that the Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan—neither outwardly, physically, nor as a pledge of Canaan—but rather that Canaan pertained to a temporal promise flowing out of the covenant of grace. Also in the New Testament the covenant of grace includes temporal blessings. The apostle Paul therefore changes the promise of Canaan into the promise of the earth: “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph 6:3).

Thirdly, we maintain that the Old Testament did not begin at Mount Horeb, but rather with the first promise of the gospel given to Adam in Paradise. This is true for the following reasons:

(1) It is evident from what has been said before: The Old Testament does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan, and therefore did neither begin with Abraham, nor with Horeb, nor with the entrance into Canaan.

(2) The first book of Moses describes the state of the church prior to the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. This book is a book of the Old Testament, as the apostle confirms: “For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. ... But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart” (2 Cor 3:14-15). Paul here refers to the books of Moses—not only the last four, but also the first one. Thus, the first book of Moses is a book of the Old Testament. Consequently, the church was at that time in the Old Testament; therefore, the Old Testament did not begin with Horeb, but with Adam.

(3) During the Old Testament period, Christ was depicted and sacrificed typically in the sacrifices. Thereby it was understood and confessed that satisfaction for sin had not actually occurred—satisfaction which one day would be accomplished by the seed of the woman. This period the apostle refers to as the first covenant: “For if that first covenant had been faultless. ... In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old” Heb 8:7,13. However, what was the first covenant or testament? That covenant which was administered by way of types and sacrifices, for:

(i) there is no other text in which it is contrasted with the new; that is, the one which came in its place;

(ii) the apostle shows this in the same chapter, verse 5: “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”

Thus, the entire period during which Christ was exemplified and typified was the Old Testament.

Christ was, however, depicted and sacrificed by way of shadows in the sacrifices not only in and after Moses’ time, but also prior to Moses—from the very time of Abraham. Already then they had altars and sacrifices of the firstborn of clean cattle as well as of the fruits of the field. We observe this with Cain and Abel Gen 4:3-4, Noah Gen 8:20, Abraham Gen 12:7-8, the sacrifice of Isaac and of the ram in Isaac’s place Gen 22:13, Isaac Gen 26:25, and Jacob, who built an altar upon God’s command (Gen 35:1-7). In all this Christ was depicted for them; therefore it is said of Christ that He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Whereas the Old Testament consists of the ministry of shadows, and since the ministry of shadows has functioned since Adam, the Old Testament thus originates with Adam.

(4) The period when sins were atoned for by Christ prior to His incarnation belongs to the Old Testament. This is evident from Heb 9:15: “And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, *that by means of death*, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” However, Christ did not only atone for the sins committed subsequent to Moses, but also prior to Moses, that is, since the time of Adam. This is beyond controversy.

*Evasive Argument:* Christ did indeed make atonement for those sins, but the apostle nevertheless speaks only of the Old Testament which began with the exodus of the church from Egypt, and thus limits the forgiveness of sins to that period.

*Answer (i)* Since the disputants believe that the inheritance of Canaan constitutes the Old Testament, the apostle would then have to speak only of those sins which were committed relative to that testament. This is absurd and contradicts the objective of the apostle.

(ii) Scripture does not divide the period prior to Christ as a period of promise prior to Moses, and a period subsequent to Moses, denominating only that period as the Old Testament. Scripture only knows of two periods: yesterday and today. *Yesterday* is the entire period prior to Christ, and *today* is the period subsequent to Christ. It declares that the death of Christ was equally efficacious in both periods: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

(iii) The apostle shows in the same chapter, Heb 9, that he

does not restrict the atonement of sin to the period from Moses forward; rather, he has in view all sins of believers committed prior to Christ—and thus also those sins which have been committed from the foundation of the world. This is evident in verse 26: “For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” This means that His one sacrifice would then have lacked the efficacy to remove all the sins of His elect which had been committed from the foundation of the world. Thus it is a certainty that the time from Adam to Christ is the time of the Old Testament.

(5) The Old Testament constitutes that period, the sacrifices and typical ministry of which had to cease and be annulled by virtue of their fulfillment through Christ, the substance of the shadows. “In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13). It cannot be maintained here that the apostle has only the period of Moses in view, calling it the first testament. In addition to what has been stated above, none would be able to show that the sacrifices and other shadows in use prior to Moses had been abolished. However, all those sacrifices and shadows in use prior to Moses also belong to “those things that are shaken,” which have to be removed (Heb 12:27). All those things were abolished, just as those in use during and after Moses. Consequently, the sacrifices since the time of Adam belong to the Old Testament. This period is as much the time of the Old Testament as is the time after Moses.

*Objection #1:* “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deut 5:2-3). Thus, the covenant commenced at Horeb.

*Answer:* Israel stood before Jordan, ready to enter Canaan. Moses, addressing those who were alive at that moment, contrasted them with their fathers. The covenant which God made with them there was not made with their fathers. Who were the fathers? They were those who died during the forty-year sojourn in the wilderness—this in accordance with God’s threat that all who had left Egypt, being twenty years of age or above, would not enter Canaan. The Lord had indeed made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Horeb. Those involved, however, were already dead and did not receive the fulfillment of the promise of Canaan. Instead, those who were then alive would possess it, and with them God made this covenant.

The essence of this covenant was no different from the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with Israel at Horeb. In essence they are one and the same: “... that the Lord

thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers” (Deut 7:12). However, the circumstances were different, involving different people: a people who now stood ready to cross Jordan and enter into Canaan. It was a solemn renewal of that covenant; it had not taken place with their fathers, but it had with them. Circumstances will change a given situation; thus a given matter is referred to in different terms, thereby negating the former as to measure and manner. Observe this in John 7:39: “The Holy Ghost was not yet given,” who, however, was from all eternity, and of whom believers prior to and during the time of Christ were partakers. Consider also Rom 16:25-26: “... according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest.” It is even clearer in Eph 3:5: “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.” The intent here is the same: not with our fathers, but with us. Those who advance the initial text as a counter argument cannot but understand this text to mean just that, for they do not place the beginning of the Old Testament at the moment when Israel stood before the Jordan and solemnly renewed the covenant, but at the exodus or at Horeb.

*Objection #2:* “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Jer 31:32). Since God established the Old Testament then, one must therefore place its commencement at that time, and not any earlier.

*Answer (1)* This has already been answered; that is, when a matter which in essence already existed is said to have transpired subsequent thereto, it means that it has occurred in a different manner and measure. The covenant made at Horeb in its essence existed prior to that, for it was the covenant which God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is by virtue of that covenant that God delivered Israel from Egypt in order to bring them to Canaan (Exod 2:24). It is by virtue of that covenant that God inaugurated the covenant with Israel at Horeb and at the Jordan. “Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ... that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God ... that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” Deut 29:10,12-13. Yes, it was the covenant of grace itself, as we shall demonstrate in the next chapter. Thus, the reference to the time of the exodus is due to the public execution and inauguration of the covenant, but not relative to its essence. Things are therefore

ascribed to Moses which had been instituted long before his time, such as circumcision. “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision” (John 7:22). Likewise, even though altars and sacrifices, the distinction between clean and unclean cattle, and circumcision had been instituted and were in use long before Moses, the law of shadows is ascribed to him because in his time the ministry of shadows was deployed in its full eminence and glory.

*Objection #3:* “... these (Hagar and Sarah) are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar” (Gal 4:24). The Old Testament therefore necessarily begins at Sinai.

*Answer:* The apostle does not state that it began at Sinai. Rather, he refers to this place due to the official ratification and the solemn inauguration of this covenant, for it has been shown that the covenant, as far as its essence is concerned, already existed prior to this. If Hagar were the covenant, it must consequently originate with her. By way of application, she is referred to as the covenant retroactively, there being similarity and agreement in some matters (cf. p. 382). We shall discuss this text more comprehensively elsewhere. From what has been said, it has been shown sufficiently that this text does not state that the Old Testament commenced at Sinai.

*Objection #4:* “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood” (Heb 9:18). The word “dedicated” signifies the construction of something new; thus, one must place the origin of the Old Testament at Sinai. There, by way of a large system, it was ratified with blood. The apostle refers to this time, which is evident from the verses which follow.

*Answer* (1) Dedication does not signify the beginning of a matter which previously did not exist, for this word is also used for something which is either improved or renewed: “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication” (John 10:22). Here is the same word, signifying renewal.

(2) The first covenant was already ratified in Adam’s time with the first sacrifice. Noah ratified it by blood when he exited the ark. When the covenant was established with Abraham and his seed, it was also solemnly ratified with blood (Gen 15:8-9).

(3) A marriage may have been arranged long before the official ceremony; however, this does not constitute a different marriage. A king may already be king and have reigned prior to having been crowned. However, the crowning ceremony neither makes him a new king nor does it even make him a king. It is the same here. The covenant spoken of at Sinai existed already and had been initiated several times previously. However, in this situation it manifests

itself under entirely different circumstances. At this occasion, there was a general and public ratification of the covenant which had been established with their father Abraham. The shadows and types were now regulated and arranged in a different order, all of which would be subservient to keep the church in the midst of that nation faithful to true religion. Thus, the identical covenant, which had already existed and had already been inaugurated, was ratified anew with festive ceremonies. Therefore, this text does not indicate that the Old Testament commenced at Sinai.

*Remission of Sins by the Shedding of Blood by Way of Sacrifices Predates Moses and the Ceremonial Laws*

We have hereby demonstrated that the Old Testament did not begin at Sinai, but with Adam; and that the Old Testament did not consist in the inheritance of Canaan as being an example and pledge of heaven. Consequently, the period from Adam to Moses can no longer be referred to as the *time of promise* in contrast with the time after Sinai. The entire period from Adam to Christ is the time of promise. What the apostle says of the fathers of the Old Testament in Heb 11:13 is most certainly true for the believers of all that time: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

The supposition which distinguishes between the time prior to Moses as being the time of promise only, and the time after Moses as being the Old Testament, engenders another supposition: The sacrifices from Adam to Moses were neither mandatory nor imposed, but were offered voluntarily, and then only when men had a desire to do so. These sacrifices were not intended to declare men guilty in regard to sin, unpaid debt, and inability to make personal satisfaction, and to lead them to the only sacrifice of Christ, He being the fulfilling antitype of their foreshadowing sacrifice.

We respond, first of all, that we cannot imagine there would be anyone who would maintain that the sacrifices of that period were neither instituted nor mandated, for:

(1) How would man himself be able to fabricate such suitable types of Christ, they being the same types as were commanded of God subsequent to Sinai, and to that end distinguish between clean and unclean cattle?

(2) Their sacrifices would then not even have been religious in nature. Instead, it would have been a self-willed religion established by men, which had been forbidden by God and declared by the Lord Jesus to be vain (Matt 15:9).

(3) They would then not have been able to sacrifice in faith—which nevertheless they did. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb 11:4). Their sacrifices could then not have been pleasing to God—which nevertheless they were. “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour” (Gen 8:21).

(4) God had expressly commanded to build an altar: “And God said unto Jacob ... make there an altar” (Gen 35:1). If there is a command to build an altar, then there is also a command to offer up sacrifice, this being the purpose for which the altar was made.

Secondly, it is God’s will that all religion instituted and commanded of God be practiced. God has never given man the freedom of choice as to whether he would practice a mandatory religious exercise or not. Noncompliance with God’s commandment is disobedience toward Him. Furthermore, God does not want compulsory service. All service must proceed from faith and love; and wherever these are present, there will be voluntary compliance. Any religious exercise which one does against his wishes and by coercion will not be well-pleasing to God. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam 15:22). Whatever was needed for the construction of the tabernacle had to be given voluntarily. It is commanded that it be so: “Serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind” (1 Chron 28:9). Since God had commanded the sacrifices, and everyone was thus obligated to comply, God uses motives to stimulate men to be obedient, doing so at times with promises and at other times with threats—it being God’s will that transgressors of His law be punished by having them expelled from the church. Since God also had a separated people (a congregation or church) who practiced religion prior to Moses and Abraham, there was necessarily also order—and thus also rebuke and excommunication from the congregation if someone was and continued to be disobedient.

Both prior to and after Moses, the shadows were not given for punitive purposes; that is, as a vexatious and troublesome burden. Rather, they were a divine blessing and benefit. They constituted the gospel which instructed them about Christ and led them to Him. The more types God afforded them, the greater benefit God bestowed upon them, and the more clearly He made Christ known to them. The godly found great delight in these types and thanked the Lord for them. Therefore, we readily admit that the sacrifices prior to the time of Moses were not given to be a vexatious burden—as is also true for the sacrifices subsequent to Moses. Among all the ordinances prior to Christ, there was none more difficult or painful than circumcision, which Peter refers to as “a yoke ... which

neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). This circumcision had already been instituted several hundred years prior to Moses; nevertheless, compliance with this ordinance was delightful and easy for those whose pleasure it was to serve God according to His will.

Thirdly, all sacrifices point to Christ. Apart from that purpose they were neither instituted, nor were they pleasing to God, who is not pleased with external service. Thus, the sacrifices prior to Moses also looked forward to Christ, and it is for that reason that Christ is called “the Lamb which was slain before the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Moreover, they sacrificed in faith, which always points to Christ. Therefore, the sacrifices prior to Moses typified Christ.

Fourthly, all the sacrifices were a remembrance again of sins to the humbling of those who sacrificed. All sacrifices declare that the guilt of sin had not been satisfied, but would be satisfied by the substitutionary Surety, Jesus Christ. All sacrifices declare that neither he who sacrifices nor the sacrifice itself can remove sin, but point to the substance of those shadows. All this is characteristic of a sacrifice; otherwise a sacrifice is not a sacrifice. Consequently, all sacrifices point to sins and their removal. This is to be observed in Lev 1:4: “And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” Thus also the sacrifice of Job—who did not descend from Abraham and who, in all probability, lived prior to Moses—pointed to sin and atonement. When offering a burnt offering, he said, “It may be that my sons have sinned” (Job 1:5). All sacrifices are of an identical nature. Nowhere is a distinction made between the sacrifices before and after Moses. There is no argument that the sacrifices after Moses pointed to sin and atonement; therefore, this is equally true prior to Moses. Even in the New Testament, holy baptism and the Lord’s Supper point to sin and atonement—much more so than the sacrifices in the Old Testament. From all this it is very clear that religion prior to and after Moses does not differ as to nature and sort—nor is there a difference between the state of the church prior to and after Moses.

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## CHAPTER TWO

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### The Church from Abraham to the Law, or Sinai

During the time preceding Abraham—a period of approximately two thousand years—the church consisted of an indiscriminate variety of nationalities, there being no connection with any particular nation or locality. Beginning with Abraham, however, God made a distinction among the nations. He established the church among the descendants of Abraham, and in a given locality, determining this to be Canaan. Thereby one could acquire knowledge about the Christ who was to come with that much more certainty. By way of ancestry, Christ descended from Adam and was thus the promised seed of the woman. Subsequently, this seed was restricted to Abraham, thereafter to Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and finally to David, after whom there was no further restriction.

The distinction between the church before and after Abraham *does not relate to the practice of religion* (this being one and the same), but rather *to her being restricted to one nation*. Subsequent to the church having been restricted to Abraham's seed, several transformations occurred. They can be reduced to six: 1) from Abraham to Moses, 2) from Moses to the judges, 3) from the judges to the kings, 4) from the kings to the captivity in Babylon, 5) from the beginning of the captivity to the return to Canaan, and 6) from this return to Christ, all of which comprehends a period of approximately two thousand years.

#### *The Church from Abraham to Moses*

Abraham, the son of Terah, Nahor, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Selah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah, lived in Mesopotamia (which in our

language means “the land between two rivers”), in a city named *Ur*, thereafter inhabited by the Chaldeans. Soon after the flood, true religion had been corrupted—even in the generation of Shem, among whose descendants the church existed until Christ. Abraham’s ancestors had become very degenerate, and, like Abraham, were worshipers of idols (cf. Josh 24:14-15). Thus, there was not the least probability for true religion to be restored in their generational line—much less for the church to exist strictly among their descendants. But God, who in all things manifests His sovereign grace, called Abraham in an extraordinary manner and revealed to him that the Messiah would come forth from him—commanding him to leave his country and kindred. He was to go to a different land, the location of which God did not reveal to him at that time. God only told him that He would show it to him. Abraham obeyed God, left *Ur*, and resided for a period of time in Haran, also located in Mesopotamia. After his father’s death, however, Abraham departed from Haran as well, and crossed the river Euphrates, taking with him his wife Sarah, his brother’s son, Lot, and all that belonged to him—his possessions as well as those servants and maids who were his property. After much roaming about, he entered Canaan near Sichem and settled there, not knowing that this was the land that God would show to him. There God appeared to him and promised that his seed would inherit this land. In response, Abraham built an altar to sacrifice unto the Lord to show his gratitude—as Noah did after he left the ark. A famine in Canaan caused Abraham to leave that land and to travel to Egypt. From there he returned to Canaan—to the place where he had previously built the altar. He dwelt there as a stranger, however, not having one square foot as his own property.

As a result of the multiplication of their cattle, Abraham and Lot could no longer dwell together. Abraham gave Lot the choice as to where he wished to settle, and Lot chose the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. After having lived there for a period of time, the region was conquered by Chedorlaomer, who led away captive both man and beast. Lot was among the captives. Having been notified thereof, Abraham gathered an army of three hundred eighteen men, born in his house, and defeated Chedorlaomer, and rescued his nephew Lot. Lot remained in this region until the time that those cities and the surrounding region were overthrown, at which time the Lord rescued him by means of angels. After he had left the city together with his wife and two daughters, his wife, contrary to God’s command, looked back at Sodom. Immediately God punished her by changing her into a pillar of salt—a pillar as

hard and impossible to melt as a stone. The daughters of Lot afterward committed their shameful deed that resulted in the emergence of two evil nations which became the mortal enemies of the children of Israel.

Upon Abraham's return from his victorious battle, he met *Melchizedek*, king of Salem, who supplied refreshments for him. The identity of this Melchizedek, and whom he typified, has been dealt with in volume one, chapter 20. Thereafter the Lord again appeared to Abraham, renewed the previous promise of the Messiah to come and the multiplication of his seed, and in an extraordinary manner confirmed the covenant of grace with him. At that time God revealed to him that his descendants would be oppressed in a strange land for four hundred years, after which they would return to Canaan to possess it as their inheritance.

Since Abraham probably did not know that the Messiah and the multiplication of his seed would proceed from Sarah, he, upon Sarah's advice, lay with her maid Hagar, and begot Ishmael by her.

By renewal God appeared to Abraham, repeated the same promise, and added to it that this promise would be fulfilled by means of a son whom he would beget from his wife Sarah, commanding Abraham to call him Isaac. God also renamed Abram and Sarai: Instead of Abram, God called him Abraham, and instead of Sarai, God called her Sarah. In renewing His promise, God confirmed the covenant by way of the sacrament of circumcision. He commanded Abraham to circumcise all the males among his descendants at the eighth day—the command being accompanied by the threat that whoever would not be circumcised would be cut off from his people and be recognized as neither a descendant of Abraham nor a member of the covenant.

Circumcision:

(1) was a seal of the covenant of grace, sealing to believers the forgiveness through the Messiah who was to come. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith" (Rom 4:11).

(2) pointed out the uncleanness of nature unto humiliation. This uncleanness, being expressed by the foreskin of the heart, displeased the Lord, and thus He wanted it removed. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deut 10:16); "... all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart" (Jer 9:26).

(3) placed the children of Israel under obligation, and sealed to them their sanctification. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Jer 4:4); "In whom also ye are circumcised

with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Col 2:11).

(4) was a very evident mark of distinction for both the Israelites and strangers alike, as it indicated that they were in a covenant relationship with the Lord, and as the seed of Abraham belonged to the church.

True to the promise and the covenant which had been sealed, Sarah became pregnant and begat Isaac at the age of ninety—contrary to the course of nature. Abraham was one hundred years of age when, to his great joy, Isaac was born to him. It was, however, also a great trial, for God commanded him to sacrifice this precious son upon Mount Moriah. Abraham obeyed God in a matter of the very greatest import. One can imagine, however, that he did so with great pain in his heart. Even if he were to kill his son, he nevertheless believed that the Messiah would come forth from this son—even if God would have to resurrect him from ashes. However, God prevented him from doing so by providing him a ram which, in close proximity, was caught with his horns in the thicket and was sacrificed in his son’s stead. Thereupon God renewed his previous blessings, pertaining to both the Messiah and the multiplication of his seed through Isaac; for Ishmael had already been sent away at the request of Sarah and upon God’s command. At the occasion of Sarah’s death, Abraham purchased the field of Ephron where the cave of Machpelah was located. There he buried Sarah, and later he was buried there himself, along with Isaac and Jacob. In principle the promise of Canaan—Canaan being a land in which he, prior to this, did not own as much as one square foot—was here fulfilled for Abraham. Jacob likewise purchased a parcel of land; this portion was so precious to him, that upon this parcel having been forcefully taken from him, he regained it with his sword, and preserved it as a precious earnest which he bequeathed to Joseph.

Isaac, upon the direction of his father Abraham, and due to the faithfulness of Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, obtained Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and the sister of Laban, as his wife. She was barren, but the Lord heard Isaac’s prayer and Rebekah conceived and gave birth to Esau and Jacob after God had made known to her that the older would serve the younger. God renewed the covenant and the former promise to Isaac, who also built an altar unto the Lord and called upon His name. A profane Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Isaac, being old and blind, believed himself to be blessing his son Esau, but unknowingly, due to the quick

maneuvering of Rebekah, he blessed Jacob and gave him the rights pertaining to the firstborn.

Upon the advice of Rebekah, Isaac sent Jacob to Mesopotamia. God revealed Himself to Jacob in an extraordinary manner, promising him glorious blessings: the inheritance of Canaan and the multiplication of his seed. Upon arriving in Mesopotamia, Jacob, via a special direction of divine providence, became acquainted with Rachel and through her with her father Laban. He promised his daughter to Jacob as a reward for seven years of service. Laban deceived him, however, and secretly put Leah into Jacob's bed. Consequently, Jacob had to serve an additional seven years for Rachel. Thus, without this having been his objective, Jacob acquired two wives. From these wives and their maids Jacob fathered twelve sons and traveled with them to Canaan. Along the way he wrestled with the Lord, who changed his name to *Israel*, and blessed him greatly. Jacob cleansed his family of idols, built an altar unto the Lord, and served him uprightly.

Due to the envy of his brothers, Joseph was sold as a slave to some merchants, who brought him into Egypt where he was sold. After many vicissitudes, Joseph was highly exalted by Pharaoh, who enabled him to bring his father, together with his entire house, into Egypt, thereby preserving them during the seven-year famine. At first, Israel was treated in a friendly manner, but afterward the Egyptians greatly oppressed Israel, making the people their slaves in accordance with God's prophecy to Abraham. What could be said about *types* during this period has been expressed in the previous chapter.

When the oppression reached its zenith and all means were employed to eradicate Israel completely by killing all newborn male children, the Lord came to their rescue and delivered Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, led them into the land of Canaan, and fulfilled His oft-repeated promise.

After having been preserved for some time, Moses was put into an ark of bulrushes by his parents, who no longer dared to hide him. They placed him among the flags by the river's brink where Pharaoh's daughter and her companions found him and picked him up. On the recommendation of Moses' sister, Pharaoh's daughter committed him to his own parents for the purpose of raising him, and later adopted him as her son. God called and sent him to deliver Israel. Moses began by punishing an Egyptian; but Israel did not recognize him as their deliverer. He fled and married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro who was a priest or ruler in Midian. While watching the sheep of His father-in-law at Mount

Horeb, the Lord appeared to him in a bush which burned, but was nevertheless not consumed. God sent him forth to deliver Israel, but he sought to be released from that task. God strengthened him by way of signs, however, and permitted his eloquent brother Aaron to accompany him. Upon this, Moses departed and requested of Pharaoh to let Israel go. In response to his repeated refusals, Pharaoh was afflicted with no less than ten plagues, after which he at last allowed Israel to leave. The people of God were also made willing to go. God gave Israel the treasures of Egypt for their heavy labor. Therefore they demanded silver and gold from them, and the Egyptians gave willingly in order to be rid of the people of Israel.

The last plague consisted in the death of all the firstborn of the Egyptians. In order to exempt the people of God from this plague, God commanded them to kill a lamb—a one-year-old male without blemish—in their homes during the preceding evening. They then had to apply the blood to both of the side-posts and the lintel of their doors. Furthermore, they were commanded to roast the entire lamb in the fire, without breaking any bones, and to eat it with bitter herbs during the night, having their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands—and thus be ready to journey. They had to eat this lamb in its entirety, doing so with haste. God promised that the angel who would slay all the firstborn of Egypt would pass over all the houses where the blood of the lamb had been applied to the doors, and thus would not slay the firstborn—which indeed did occur that very night. Upon this, Pharaoh commanded Moses and Aaron to depart—yes, the people strongly urged them to depart and Israel did so that very same night in a hasty yet orderly manner, each squadron being five by five.

The Lord decreed that this slaying of the lamb—the blood of which was applied to the doorposts to deliver Israel from the slaying angel—was to be observed annually during the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month. He called it the *Passover*, which means *to pass by*. And since the blood of the lamb was the means, the lamb itself was called the Passover. “... and kill the passover” (Exod 12:21); “Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed” (Luke 22:7).

The following particulars are to be observed:

(1) God changed the months; God designated the seventh month to be the first month. Upon the tenth day of the month *Abib* the Israelites were to take a lamb from the flock, and set it apart in isolation until the fourteenth day. On that day the Israelites were to kill it toward the evening (Exod 13:6).

(2) The lamb, be it of a sheep or a goat, was to be a one-year-old male without blemish (Exod 12:5).

(3) The people were to kill it in their homes until the time that God chose a location for the ministry of types. From that time it was no longer to be killed in the homes, but only in the temple Deut 16:5-6 where the blood was to be sprinkled upon the altar 2 Chron 35:11, for the Passover was a sacrifice—being interchangeably called the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover (Exod 12:27); 2 Chron 35:7-9, or sacrifice Num 9:7,13.

(4) The lamb was neither permitted to be boiled nor to be eaten raw. Instead, it was to be roasted in the fire as one entire piece, without breaking its bones (Exod 12:9).

(5) Having been roasted, it was to be eaten, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exod 12:8).

(6) The lamb had to be eaten in its entirety; nothing was permitted to remain. Therefore, if a family was too small, as many families as necessary would have to assemble in order that everything could be consumed; or else the leftovers had to be burned by fire (Exod 12:10).

(7) Neither strangers, the uncircumcised, nor the unclean were permitted to eat; only the circumcised and the clean were permitted to do so—men, women, as well as children (Exod 12:45-47). If anyone was prevented from doing so due to extraordinary and unavoidable circumstances (or whatever else the reason may have been), he would have to observe it on the fourteenth day of the following month (Num 9:11).

(8) They had to eat the Passover being prepared to journey, having shoes on their feet, staffs in their hands, their loins girded (since they wore long garments in those lands), and in haste. No one was permitted to leave the house (Exod 12:11-12). It is credible, however, that some of these particulars only pertained to the first Passover—Israel having to depart from Egypt immediately upon the eating of the Passover.

The Passover, given by God to Israel as an institution, being a sacrifice, belonged to the law of shadows, also called the ceremonial law. It was a type of Christ, as are all sacrifices. Christ is called “our passover [even Christ] is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7); “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Peter says that we are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:19). Christ was the Son of man; He was a Man of sorrows who was without blemish, was holy, and was killed in the full strength of His life. Not one of His bones was broken, and by His shed and

sprinkled blood He delivers all His own from all plagues, and they receive eternal salvation.

After having eaten the Passover, Israel departed Egypt in haste as if they were fleeing. Yet they departed in an orderly fashion by groups of five. They deviated, however, from the normal route leading out of Egypt. When this came to Pharaoh's knowledge, he reversed his decision to let them go, quickly gathered an army, and pursued them as if they were a flock of helpless sheep. Israel came into great distress. Before them was the sea, at their sides were either the mountains or a way which was not passable, and behind them was Pharaoh who pursued them with his armed forces. Escape was impossible. Moses called upon God who responded by dividing the sea so that the waters stood as walls on both sides, and Israel traveled on dry ground across the bottom of the sea to the other side. As Pharaoh pursued them, the waters converged upon Pharaoh and his army and drowned every one of them. This crossing of the sea was a sacrament to them, sealing redemption in Christ to the believer (1 Cor 10:2). Israel, being joyful, praised the Lord and continued their journey. However, the least mishap caused them to distrust the Lord and to murmur. Nevertheless, the Lord helped them. When they were without bread, God caused manna to rain from heaven every night. When they were without water, God cleaved a rock, making water to come forth as a river, which followed them as a flood. They arrived at Mount Horeb, where God had determined that they should worship Him in a solemn manner. This manna and this rock were the sacraments for their spiritual life and of their redemption in Christ (1 Cor 10:3-4). Here they entered into a covenant with God; here God gave them the rule of life, the ten commandments; here the tabernacle was constructed at God's command; and here the ceremonial worship was prescribed to them in an orderly fashion. These matters need to be discussed in more detail.

After Israel had arrived at Horeb, Moses ascended the mountain. God commanded Moses to ask the people on His behalf if they wished to remain in the covenant and be obedient to Him (Exod 19:8). Moses relayed the message, and the people responded at once: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exod 19:8). Thus, we truly have a covenant transaction here: God proposed the covenant and added a promise, upon which the people accepted it.

*The Covenant Made at Horeb: The Confirmation of the Covenant of Grace*

This raises the following question: Is the covenant made at

Horeb the covenant of grace itself, or is it a national, external, and typical covenant, having as its only promise the inheritance of Canaan—and is thus the point at which the Old Testament commences?

We answer as follows:

(1) It is the covenant of grace itself. This transaction is but a solemn renewal of that covenant of which all believers since Adam have been partakers. God renewed this covenant with Abraham and his seed, confirming it with the sacrament of circumcision.

(2) The sound of the term *national covenant* is such, that it sometimes causes confusion for those who are not well-informed. It is, however, the covenant of grace which had previously been established with believers, but since the time of Abraham had been restricted to the posterity of Abraham. Only in that respect, and in none other, may it be referred to as a national covenant. The word “national” is not to be found in the Bible.

(3) An *external covenant*, consisting in temporal promises contingent upon external obedience, had never been established. There can be no such covenant between God and man. We have dealt with this extensively in volume one (chapter 16, pp. 457-463).

(4) The covenant of grace is a *typical covenant*, and therefore can be referred to as such, since it was administered by types which pointed to Christ. The administration of the covenant is therefore occasionally denominated as the covenant (Gen 17:3; Jer 31:31). In designating this covenant as a typical covenant, one is not to imply that it did not have an inherent spiritual promise; that is, that the covenant was only typical of spiritual benefits—particularly those of the New Testament. There is not one trace of evidence in God’s Word that this is so. Such a notion is thus to be rejected as quickly as it is stated.

(5) The Old Testament is the very embodiment of the covenant of grace, administered in the old fashion by way of shadows—and nothing other than that. If the Old Testament were other than the covenant of grace, the death of a testator other than Jesus Christ would be necessary, for no testament is confirmed except in the death of the testator (Heb 9:16-17). Furthermore, the Old Testament neither began at Horeb, having been in existence since the time of Adam, nor consisted in the inheritance of Canaan, as we have shown in detail in the previous chapter.

We have stated all this by way of general introduction.

Since the Old Testament neither began at Horeb, but rather with Adam and neither consists in the inheritance of Canaan nor is an external covenant, it remains that *the covenant made at Horeb is the covenant of grace itself*. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, the covenant made at Horeb is not a new covenant, but a renewal of a covenant previously established. This is evident from Exod 19 and from all God's dealings with Israel during their stay at Horeb. Nothing is stated there which even resembles the establishment of a new covenant—a covenant which previously had not existed. Rather, the covenant dealt with is consistently the covenant which existed previously. Observe this at the beginning of the chapter: “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, *and keep My covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exod 19:5-6,8). Here we have the solemn confirmation of the covenant. God proposes His requirements and makes promises, and all of Israel acquiesces. God neither speaks a word about Canaan nor of anything new. In His proposition He speaks of *My covenant* as a covenant that already existed and of which Israel knew. It is this covenant to which they simultaneously and solemnly agreed. Thus, the covenant was already in existence.

On the basis of and following this proceeded 1) the giving of the law of the ten commandments by God as their God (if this law were a formula of the covenant of grace, it would powerfully confirm the matter) and 2) the institution of an orderly worship, by way of types of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this covenant was not first established at Horeb, but existed prior to it. The transaction there pertained to a covenant that already existed. Prior to this there was, however, no other covenant than the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is the covenant of grace.

Secondly, the covenant established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the covenant of grace. The covenant at Horeb was, however, the same covenant as was established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, the covenant established at Horeb is the covenant of grace.

It is evident that the covenant with Abraham is the covenant of grace for the following reasons:

- (1) It had Christ as its Mediator (Gen 12:2-3; Gal 3:17).
- (2) It had God as a God who was a shield and a great reward (Gen 15:1; Gen 17:8).
- (3) By it Abraham was established as the father of all believers (Gen 17:2,4; Rom 4:11).
- (4) It had to be embraced by faith (Gen 25:6; Gen 17:3; Rom 4:18-20).

(5) It had circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:11).

That the covenant made at Horeb was the same covenant made with Abraham is first of all evident from the fact that it contained the same promises, had the same rule of life, and had the same manner of worship.

(1) *It contained the same spiritual and temporal promises.* The *spiritual* promise was that God would be their God, and that they would belong to God. “I am the Lord thy God” (Exod 20:2); “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God” (Exod 29:45); “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people” (Exod 19:6). That this is the essence of the covenant of grace is evident from 2 Cor 6:16: “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Furthermore, they were a royal priesthood and a holy nation: “And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod 19:6); “But ye are ... a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9).

The temporal promises were also the same—as for instance, the promise of Canaan. God gave this land to Abraham. “And I will give unto thee ... the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession” (Gen 17:8); “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it” (Gen 28:13). Thus, Canaan belonged to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob successively, and their descendants inherited it as an inheritance received from their father. The possessions of the parents are for the children.

(2) *It had the same rule of life*—the will of God to love the Lord, and to fear, believe, and trust Him. All this is comprehended in the command: “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). At Mount Horeb, God gave the identical command to Israel by way of the law of the ten commandments annunciated there.

(3) *There was the same manner of worship*—by way of shadows. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made altars of earth, and also offered sacrifices as Cain, Abel, and Noah did before them. They had  $\rho\mu\#\mu$  (*mishmor*),  $\tau\omega\chi\mu$  (*mitsvah*),  $\eta\theta\xi$  (*chakkah*), and  $\eta\rho\omega\tau$  (*thorah*). These are words which are generally expressive of laws—both moral and ceremonial. “Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen 26:5). They had circumcision as a sacrament of the covenant. Israel had the same ordinance—the same sacrament. Since everything was identical, Israel had the same covenant which was established with Abraham.

Secondly, it is evident that the covenant established with Israel was identical to the covenant God established with Abraham from

the fact that when mention is made of the covenant with Israel, reference is continually made to the covenant with Abraham, the declaration being that they are one and the same. “Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers” (Deut 7:11-12); “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them. ... Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God. ... That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” Deut 29:9-10,12-13.

Thus, the covenant which God established with Israel, along with the promises and the benefits, is the same; it is none other than the covenant God made with Abraham—and is thus the covenant of grace itself.

*Evasive Argument:* In these texts it is indeed stated that God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the covenant He made with Israel at Horeb would be established with their seed; but not that it is the same covenant.

*Answer* (1) This is merely conjecture and its conclusion can be answered with a denial.

(2) It expressly contradicts those texts which declare that God has established this covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that God would confirm that identical covenant with Israel, their seed.

(3) It contradicts Gen 17:7 where the Lord enters into covenant with Abraham, and in him with his seed—it being declared to be one and the same covenant. Furthermore, regarding Canaan, it was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it was their land. “And I will give unto thee ... all the land of Canaan” (Gen 17:8); “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it” (Gen 28:13). Israel received it from their father as an inheritance. Abraham had the property rights, and Israel, by reason of those rights, came into its possession in accordance with the Lord’s promise made to Abraham that He would do so.

Thirdly, not one person who is of Reformed persuasion will deny (no one can deny it!) that the covenant which has Christ as its Surety and Mediator is the covenant of grace. Such is true, however, for the covenant of Horeb, for it does have Christ as its Mediator, which is

evident from the fact that it was ratified with blood. “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you” (Exod 24:8); “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people” (Heb 9:18-19).

God had given the blood to make atonement for man. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11).

The blood of animals was not capable of reconciling man with God. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4).

This efficacy is, however, to be found in the blood of the Lord Jesus: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom 3:25); “In whom we have redemption through His blood” (Eph 1:7). The blood of animals sacrificed in the Old Testament was a type of the blood of Christ—just as the entire law of shadows pointed to future benefits and was not the essence of the matter itself (Heb 10:1). This is particularly to be observed in Heb 9 where the apostle continually compares the blood of bullocks and goats with the blood of the Lord Jesus, that is, the type with the antitype (vss. 12-14,20,25). Speaking of this in verse 23, he says, “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Heb 9:23). Therefore, just as Moses sprinkled the book and the people, the blood of Christ is called the *blood of sprinkling* (Heb 12:24; 1 Pet 1:2). It is thus both certain and obvious that the sprinkling of the book of the covenant and of the people pointed to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ (that is, the appropriation and application thereof), confirming the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant of Sinai had Christ as its Mediator, and consequently was the covenant of grace.

Fourthly, that covenant is the covenant of grace itself which has as its sacraments the sacraments of grace. A seal confirms a covenant—and then only that covenant of which it is a seal. To sever a seal from one covenant and to attach it to another covenant of an entirely different content is the height of infidelity. However, the covenant of Sinai has as its seals the seals of the covenant of grace. It was confirmed by circumcision and the Passover, both of which the children of Israel were commanded to strictly observe

upon the threat of excommunication; that is, expulsion from the congregation of God and the covenant. It has been confirmed in the previous chapter that circumcision and the Passover were the seals of the covenant of grace. Both were instituted prior to the covenant at Horeb. The disputants admit that nothing but the covenant of grace existed previously. Both sealed the covenant of grace: Circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith Rom 4:11, and the Passover was Christ (1 Cor 5:7).

Along with the three previous proofs, this proves that the covenant of Horeb was the covenant of grace.

*Refutation of Objections to the Covenant at Horeb being the Covenant of Grace*

*Objection #1:* The Word of God continually makes a distinction between the covenant at Horeb and the covenant of grace. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace, but an external covenant, consisting in the promise of Canaan as typifying heavenly benefits. This is evident from Deut 5:3: “The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” Here the fathers, who were not present at Horeb, are contrasted with those who were. It is expressly stated here that the covenant made at Horeb was not made with the fathers. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is a different covenant from the covenant of grace in which the fathers were comprehended, and which remains the same from Adam until the end of the world.

*Answer* (1) The contrast is not with the fathers prior to the exodus, but with those who had been present at Horeb and who, according to God’s threat, had died in the wilderness; and with those who presently were alive, were in the fields of Moab, and forty years later stood ready to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. At that time God solemnly renewed the covenant; therefore the objection is null and void.

(2) This covenant made in Moab was the same in essence, but different in regard to time, persons, and manner. In this context it is said that God did not make that covenant with their forefathers who died in the wilderness—just like Scripture frequently speaks of or denies a matter which did not exist under given circumstances. (Cf. John 7:39; Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:5; Appendix, chapter 1, p. ###373).

(3) If one wishes to interpret the fathers as referring to Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. the contrast also does not pertain to the essence of the covenant, but is relative to the circumstances, for it was one in essence, as has been shown in the confirmation: “The Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy

which He swore unto thy fathers” (Deut 7:12). However, here the reference is not to *fathers* but to *Horeb*.

*Objection #2:* “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts” (Jer 31:31-33). Here there is an obvious contrast between the covenant at Horeb and the new covenant in the days of the New Testament—not in regard to circumstances, but the essence itself. In the New Testament God would write the laws in their heart and He, as is promised in verses 33-34, would forgive their unrighteousness and remember their sins no more. The text in question does not connect any of this to the covenant at Horeb. Thus, the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace, but an external, typical covenant, the promise of which only pertained to the inheritance of Canaan.

*Answer:* It is a fact that there is a distinction here between the Old and New Testaments. It is equally certain that the New Testament did not exist during the days of the Old Testament, but came after the Old Testament; that is, it replaced and set aside the Old Testament. Furthermore, it is true that the New Testament is the covenant of grace, comprehending the spiritual benefits in Christ—and to remain with the text: the writing of the law in their hearts, to have God as their God (vs. 33), to have enlightened eyes of the understanding, and to have the forgiveness of sins (vs. 34). Moreover, it is equally certain that the Old Testament comprehended all these benefits of the covenant of grace and the covenant of grace itself. This we shall show in the following chapters.

It is also agreed that the covenant of grace has been since Adam and will remain the same in essence until the end of the world—as in our opinion it has been irrefutably proven in the previous chapter that the Old Testament began with the very first promise in Paradise. Consequently, it follows with equal certainty that the contrast between the Old and New Testaments cannot be one of essence. Since the New Testament is the covenant of grace—the New Testament having been nonexistent during the Old Testament, existing subsequent to, instead of, and the setting aside of the Old Testament being implied—then all who lived prior to the time of the New Testament would not have had a covenant of grace. There would then have been no fear of God, no knowledge of the mystery of salvation,

and no forgiveness of sins; whereas people were indeed saved and did possess all the benefits of the covenant of grace.

Therefore, the contrast pertains to the circumstances, the manner of administration, and the measure of light, faith, hope, and love. Old Testament believers had the law written in their hearts, had God as their God, had the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, and had the forgiveness of sins. They did not have this, however, with the same clarity as New Testament believers. The Old Testament is the covenant of grace, administered by shadows and examples. The New Testament is also the covenant of grace—but administered without shadows. The one testament is called “old” because of its previous and original existence; and it has become old and has vanished. The other testament is called “new” because it chronologically followed the old, and it was also administered differently from the old. Scripture calls something new which, though it existed previously, is renewed. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another” (John 13:34).

*Additional Objection:* Man cannot annul the covenant of grace. However, the Jews did set the Old Testament aside (vs. 32). Thus, the Old Testament is not the covenant of grace.

*Answer* (1) He who has truly entered into the covenant of grace will by reason of the immutability of God and the influence of preserving grace not break it. This is according to the promise found in (Jer 32:40). The unconverted Jews, however, made a covenant of works of the old covenant. They desired to be justified by observing the ceremonial service, and believed that the blood of animals removed their sins. Thus, they broke the old covenant, changing and distorting its administration and objective in such a manner as to make it differ completely from the purpose for which the ceremonial service was instituted.

(2) By their ungodly lives the unconverted Jews showed that they had never entered rightly into the covenant of grace, but had only entered in externally and thus were no partakers of the benefits of the covenant. Thus, this breach of covenant relates to them and their activities.

(3) If the Old Testament consisted in the promise of Canaan, and if they had rendered that null and void, the unconverted Jews would have rescinded the inheritance of Canaan; it would no longer be their inheritance. To this, however, they will not admit.

*Objection #3:* “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Here we have an express contrast between Moses and Christ—between law, and truth and grace. Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament, and Christ

of the New Testament. The law, the Old Testament, did not provide grace. It only had the promise of the land of Canaan. In the New Testament, however, there is truth and grace. The covenant at Horeb was thus not the covenant of grace.

*Answer* (1) For the sake of the honor of Christ, I vehemently deny that Moses was a mediator of the Old Testament. To maintain this is very detrimental to the mediatorial office of Christ. Christ was the Mediator—and the *only* Mediator—of the Old as well as the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today (Heb 13:8). Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8).

(2) Moses is only called mediator in Gal 3:19 in consequence of his transmitting of the law as a messenger—the law which had been placed in his hands by angels. However, he is never called the mediator of the Old Testament and was never a mediator in Canaan, for he had already expired prior to Israel’s arrival in Canaan. Or was he a mediator in heaven? Moses was no more a mediator of the children of Israel than he is for us at the present time. We have the law, transmitted by Moses, as much as they had it.

(3) The contrast on which this text focuses is between law, grace, and truth, and conveys that the law (interpret this as broadly as you wish) could not grant salvation. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (Rom 3:20); “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices ... make the comers thereunto perfect” (Heb 10:1). All the shadows, when divorced from their substance, are of no value; they were not instituted as such. Their design was to lead to Christ, in order to believe in Him. Christ is the true image and embodiment of the shadows. By virtue of His satisfaction, believers both of the Old and New Testaments obtain grace. That is the contrast expressed in this text. What then is left in this text of an external covenant? What basis is there for asserting that the covenant at Horeb is not the covenant of grace itself?

*Objection #4:* Consider 2 Cor 3. In this chapter there is a contrast between the Old and New Testaments. The apostle calls the Old Testament the letter that kills (vs. 6), “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” (vs. 7), and “the ministration of condemnation” (vs. 9); whereas the New Testament is called “the ministration of the spirit” (vs. 8), and “the ministration of righteousness” (vs. 9). It is thus very evident that the Old Testament was not the covenant of grace.

*Answer* (1) It can be seen very clearly that the reference here is to the law of the ten commandments, which alone was written upon

and engraven in tables of stone. This was not the case with the ceremonial laws. And since the disputants postulate the ten commandments to be a declaration of the covenant of grace, how can they avoid contradicting themselves? Is the compendium of the covenant of grace a ministry of death and a ministry of condemnation? They will therefore have to answer me concerning their own objections.

(2) If the Old Testament were a ministry of condemnation, it would be without promise; and it would also not have Canaan as its inheritance. It would then be a covenant of condemnation. Who would ever be willing and delighted to enter into a covenant of condemnation? Old Testament believers would then have been partakers of a covenant of condemnation. If they had been partakers of a covenant of condemnation, not one believer from the time of Moses would have been saved, but all would have been condemned. And thus by using this text, one contradicts himself, the Scriptures, and the children of God.

(3) The text neither distinguishes nor contrasts the Old and New Testaments. Rather, it does so relative to both the moral and ceremonial laws (let us consider it in such broad terms) and their administration as such, that is, divorced from Christ. This is how the Jews viewed and used the ceremonial law. This is to be observed throughout the entire letters to the Galatians and the Hebrews, as well as in what Paul expresses in Rom 9:31-32: “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” And thus he declares that the administration of the law, when divorced from Christ, is but a dead letter—a ministry of death and condemnation. For no one could be justified in that manner; but all who adhere to this external structure, divorced from and without Christ, could only be condemned. Apart from Christ there is no salvation, “for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Gal 3:10). He contrasts this with Christ and the proclamation of Him, calling that the ministration of the Spirit and a ministration of righteousness. For all believers are called to Christ by the gospel which was present in both the Old and New Testaments—and who, believing in Christ, are justified. Therefore, there is nothing here which could either be supportive of an external covenant, or disprove that the Old Testament is the covenant of grace.

*Objection #5:* “But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is

mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal 4:23-26). Here the Old and New Testaments are contrasted with each other. The Old Testament, depicted by Hagar and her son Ishmael, was established at Sinai. It commenced at that time as a carnal and external covenant (having Canaan as its inheritance and having no true and spiritual benefits), imposing hard bondage by way of the ceremonies. In contrast, the New Testament, depicted by Sarah and Isaac, is a spiritual covenant, sets at liberty, and grants spiritual and eternal benefits. Thus, the covenant at Sinai is not the covenant of grace.

*Answer:* To respond to this objection, we shall first exegete the text, and then counter the objection extracted from this text.

The history at hand pertains to Abraham, who laid with Hagar upon Sarah’s request and fathered Ishmael, who according to the flesh was from Abraham. Subsequently, Abraham received a specific promise that he would receive a son by his wife Sarah, whom he would call Isaac, and that from Isaac would proceed the multiplication of his seed and the Messiah. Isaac having been born, Ishmael hates, mocks, and persecutes him to the utmost of his ability (vs. 29). Verse 30 states that Ishmael, together with his mother Hagar, was cast out without inheritance. However, godly Isaac remained at home and became the heir of everything.

The apostle does not refer to these matters as *examples*, for they were not such in the true sense of the word. They were neither incorporated as part of the body of worship, nor did they belong to the ceremonial law, as then there would also be examples of examples—and they in turn of others. Hagar would have been an example of the Old Testament, and that in turn of Jerusalem (vs. 25). Rather, he calls them *allegoroumena*—matters which by reason of similarity to and agreement with certain matters can be applied to other matters and meanings. (See previous chapter.)

He calls Hagar and Sarah two covenants. God, in Adam, had established the covenant of works with the human race, the demands of which are repeated in the law of the ten commandments. This covenant having been rendered ineffectual due to sin, God reestablished it as the *covenant of grace*, which in essence is the same and will abide from Adam until the end of the world. However, since the Surety of that covenant did not come at the very outset, but about four thousand years after the initial establishment of the covenant, it was necessary, and it pleased God in His wisdom and goodness, to administer that covenant of grace by way of examples and shadows of the promised Surety until the advent of Christ, the Surety. Subsequent to

His coming, however, there was no longer any need or purpose for them; Christ now administers the covenant without them. The distinction made between the *old* and the *new* covenant relates to the administration thereof, they being one in essence.

Its denomination as either old or new does not relate to the essence of the covenant, but to its administration, as is evident from what follows:

(1) The old covenant is no external covenant which promised external benefits upon external obedience, did not commence at Sinai, and does not consist in the inheritance of Canaan; rather, it is the covenant of grace itself—all of which has been shown in the previous chapter. Consequently, it is called “old” relative to its administration.

(2) The new covenant is not called “new” relative to its essence, for it is the covenant of grace itself which has been operative since Adam. Rather, it is called new relative to its administration. The new covenant or testament has come subsequent to the old, has taken its place by annulling the former, and was not new as long as the old covenant was operative. The New Testament did not exist in the days of the Old Testament, whereas the covenant of grace did. Consequently, the covenant of grace is called the new covenant or testament only relative to its administration. In this text the apostle speaks of the covenant of grace in its twofold administration, calling it *two covenants*.

The apostle calls the one the covenant of Sinai. This does not imply that the covenant of grace commenced at that time (see previous chapter), but that it was at that time solemnly inaugurated, and attained its greatest glory and luster. This engendered bondage or servitude—just as Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Servitude can be either good or bad. Good servitude consists in serving God in spirit and in truth, and according to His will. The godly are therefore often called the servants of God, as well as servants of righteousness (Rom 6:19). They yield their “members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (vs. 19) and are “servants of God” (vs. 22). In that light Paul says of himself in 1 Cor 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” It is such service God had in view by giving the ceremonies. They were given to that end as the contents of the old covenant. There is also an evil servitude when one serves sin and is in bondage to sin. “... as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity” (Rom 6:19). This also applies when one wishes to serve God in a manner contrary to what He has commanded: “Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship” (Col 2:23).

The covenant of Sinai which engenders bondage brought forth

illegitimate children, just as Ishmael was illegitimate. This was not a consequence of the nature of this covenant, for it was an administration instituted by God for the purpose of worship. It was pleasing to Him, and therefore the godly found great delight in it, praising and thanking the Lord for it. Rather, it was through human perversion that this evangelical manner of worship—which the old administration was—was changed into a covenant of works. Thus, the antitype, Christ, was separated from the types, thereby removing the very soul from them. They adhered to the external deeds of the law and sought their righteousness therein. This Sinai was synonymous to “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children” (Gal 4:29). This was the nature of the condition of Jerusalem in the days when Paul wrote this. There was no adherence to the covenant of Sinai which had been broken, as the Lord testified in (Jer 31:32). It had been changed into a covenant other than what the Lord had given—into a covenant of works—and they sought their righteousness therein. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3); “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4). Since they were mired in the external things, they were not serving God, for He had not given these ceremonies for that purpose. Their servitude toward the ceremonies was *an evil servitude*. God had not imposed this servitude upon them in this covenant. The apostle issues a warning against this, saying: “Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal 5:1); “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” Gal 4:29 All who had brought themselves therefore in a bondage of this nature were in a condition just like unto Ishmael, who was a son of a bondwoman, and by virtue of that relationship, he himself was in bondage. They did indeed issue forth from Abraham according to the flesh, but they were not the children of promise. They had no spiritual graces and no spiritual inheritance. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom 9:6-8). Just as Ishmael was a reviler and persecutor of Isaac, likewise the Jews under bondage were revilers and persecutors of those gracious souls who had been born after the Spirit (Gal 4:29). Just as Ishmael had been expelled, God had likewise

rejected them—their destruction with that of Jerusalem already being imminent. Thus Hagar and her son Ishmael represent all who are in the covenant only in an external sense. This is what is meant by Hagar, Sinai, and Jerusalem.

The covenant contrasted with the covenant of Sinai (which, as stated above, in this context is represented by Sarah) is the new covenant. In its essence it already existed in the Old Testament; all the godly were partakers of it, and by it they obtained redemption and the eternal inheritance. Relative to its administration, however, it is a new covenant which had its beginning with the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. As far as essence was concerned, this covenant was one and the same as the old covenant. It is a gracious covenant, pertains to heavenly benefits and a heavenly inheritance, and begets free and heavenly children. “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal 4:27). This covenant, administered in the new manner, would be very fruitful in bringing forth free and spiritual children. “Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” (Gal 4:27). This is Sarah and the Jerusalem which is from above. Paul’s objective in presenting these matters was to draw the Jews away from their errors, and to prevent believing Jews from succumbing to them. The latter continually wanted to return to the ceremonies—not to use them again as types, for they believed that the Messiah, Christ, had already come, but to use those things and activities for worship, and thereby to seek their righteousness.

Now we shall proceed with the rebuttal of the objection extracted from this text: The covenant made at Sinai is not the covenant of grace. The entire thrust of this argument is derived from 1) the covenant at Sinai being depicted by Hagar and Ishmael, 2) it being said to be a covenant of bondage, and 3) this covenant being contrasted with the New Testament, depicted by Sarah and Isaac and consisting in heavenly benefits.

*Answer* (1) Not one word is mentioned here of Canaan being the inheritance in which they who object insist the Old Testament consists. It also does not concur with it being typified by Hagar and Ishmael, who were sent away without an inheritance.

(2) Also here it is not stated that the Old Testament had its beginning at Sinai. Sinai is mentioned since the Old Testament was solemnly inaugurated and adorned with all its luster and glory at that occasion—a covenant, as has been shown in the previous chapter, which already existed since the time of Adam. It is likewise

stated that circumcision was given by Moses, even though it had been given to Abraham long before that.

(3) Paul, who compares the Old Testament with Hagar, does this not as it had been instituted of old, but as it had been perverted into a covenant of works. So it was in Jerusalem at the time when Paul wrote this—a city which had completely deviated from the proper institution of the covenant. The objection can therefore not be sustained.

(4) Also the word “bondage” does not contribute at all to the discrediting of our proof. Divine servitude, even though it is grievous for the flesh, is a holy work and has the promise of all spiritual benefits and salvation. It is not expressive at all of an external covenant pertaining to temporal promises only. However, God did not impose the grievousness of this bondage. Rather, this bondage was in consequence of their perversion of the gospel (which is what the ceremonies were), making it a covenant of works in order to be justified by it. This yoke was therefore an unbearable burden.

(5) It cannot be true that Hagar depicts an external covenant, for the godly were also comprehended in the covenant of Sinai, and thus they would simultaneously hail from Hagar and Sarah. They would have been ungodly Ishmaels, mockers, persecutors of those who are after the Spirit, no heirs, and subject to being cast out—and simultaneously be sons, freemen, and heirs. It is thus evident that this objection is without substance, a fact which becomes all the more clear when one adds to this the exposition of the text as mentioned.

*Objection #6:* “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22); “How much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). The New Testament is a better covenant, having better promises and Jesus as a Surety. Thus, the Old Testament is an external covenant, having temporal promises without having Jesus as a Surety.

*Answer (1)* One could at best conclude from this objection that the Old Testament was not such a good covenant, and did not have such good promises; but not that the Old Testament was simply an external covenant, having only temporal promises. That which differs in measure does not differ in nature; that which differs as far as circumstances are concerned does not differ in essence. The essence of the covenants is one and the same. As to the covenant of grace itself, the manner of administration differs as far as clarity and scope are concerned. That is the reason why the one is better than the other.

(2) The apostle's objective here is to show the excellency of Christ, and how in His ministry He is superior to the priests, their work, and the types of the Old Testament. Paul speaks of all this—as they are in and of themselves, divorced from the antitype Christ. In this manner the Jews of that time viewed the entire ministry of shadows; they embraced it as a covenant of works and sought to be justified thereby. Such were the persons the apostle opposed, showing them that all such service, when divorced from Christ, was neither efficacious nor beneficial. Instead, it was ineffective, useless, and flawed. Over against this the apostle placed the Lord Jesus, who is the antitype of those shadows and the Mediator of the covenant of grace. The objectors place the external administration as such in opposition to the covenant of grace and Christ as its Surety—just as if one were to divorce the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper from their spiritual meaning, considering these elements just as they are, while contrasting them with the Lord Jesus and His fullness. The covenant of grace is indeed a better covenant than all those external administrations—better than all those animal sacrifices. Of that better covenant Jesus is Surety and Mediator. That covenant has better promises than its external administration as such and when viewed as divorced from the antitype. To make such a separation is fruitless, for the covenant was not instituted apart from the antitype.

*Objection #7:* “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded) ... but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. ... And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” Heb 12:18-20,22,27. In this passage we observe a very significant distinction between the two covenants—one is so dreadful, whereas the other is so lovely. The people prayed that the one be concealed, whereas the other is so desirable. The one is so unbearable, whereas the other is so light, gentle, and sweet. The one is finite, whereas the other is of eternal duration. All these distinctions indicate very clearly that one, the Old Testament, is but an external covenant.

*Answer* (1) This objection contradicts itself. In verses 18-20 mention is made only of the giving of the ten commandments. The ceremonial laws were not given in that fashion, and furthermore,

the opposing parties deemed the law of the ten commandments to be a formula of the covenant of grace. This would then mean that the covenant of grace would have been announced in such a dreadful fashion. How can the disputants then conclude from this frightful event that the covenant established there cannot be the covenant of grace?

(2) There is not even a reference to a covenant here. No name is mentioned, nor is the matter referred to. Thus, one cannot construct an external covenant from this passage.

(3) All that is stated in the text neither refers to the matter nor to the contents of the ten commandments—which they were also unable to either fulfill or practice. Rather, it refers to the manner in which it was given, which they could not bear. Their prayer was that God would no longer speak to them in that manner, but that God would speak to them instead through Moses.

(4) The fact that the things of the Old Testament are said to be shaken (vs. 27) is not indicative of an external covenant. Rather, the specific manner in which the covenant of grace was administered had to cease, since the substance of that of which the types were a shadow had come. The administration of the New Testament will also cease, but does this therefore mean that it is not the covenant of grace? The change of administration is not indicative of a change of covenant.

*Objection #8:* That covenant into which an entire nation, head for head, the godly and the ungodly, must enter (and also did enter); the sacraments of which every single individual had to partake of; and which was capable of being broken and annulled, is not the covenant of grace, but is an external covenant. However, the covenant of Sinai was such a covenant. Therefore:

*Answer* (1) All who are called in both Old and New Testaments are obligated to obey the voice of the gospel and to enter into the covenant.

(2) There is a difference between the act of entering into the covenant, and the covenant itself. The act of entering can be of a deceitful and external nature, but it is therefore not true that the covenant is an external covenant. Those who did not enter in the right manner sinned most dreadfully, for they were all obligated to enter with an upright heart.

(3) Every believer is obliged to use the sacraments and to have their children sealed by the sacrament of incorporation. An ungodly person is also obliged to believe and to use the sacraments while believing. However, an ungodly person who was and continued to be ungodly was no more permitted to eat the Passover and

bring sacrifices than they are presently permitted to be baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper.

(4) A temporal believer can fall away; however, he does not fall out of the covenant of grace, for he was never in it. The actual breaking of the covenant occurred when he entered. There was an external entering into, and thus an external breaking of the covenant, as shown above. When all these things are considered together, it is evident that the first proposition is false—and thus the entire syllogism is null and void.

*Objection #9:* The covenant of Sinai was external in every respect. The blood, the commandments, the obedience, the promises, the atonement, the mediator (such as Moses), the sacraments, the sanctuary, and the manner of worship—all were of an external sort, and therefore it was also an external covenant.

*Answer (1)* If all these matters existed independently, and neither pointed to nor were united with the antitype; and if God were to have made a covenant with man thereby, we would allow the objection. However, neither the one nor the other is true.

(2) By way of such argumentation, it could also be concluded that the New Testament is an external covenant. There is external water, external bread and wine, external preaching, external confession, external physical activity along with words to glorify God thereby, and external and temporal promises. The covenant is therefore external. This proves the futility of the objection.

(3) All the external matters and forms of worship pertained to the antitype, Christ. Apart from Him they neither had meaning nor were instituted as such. Rather, they were united with the antitype. The manner of worship was therefore spiritual, and both the atonement and the sealing of it were in truth. The promises were not only temporal in nature, but also pertained to all the spiritual benefits of the covenant of grace. As shown earlier, Moses was not the mediator of the covenant, but only the one who transmitted the covenant. God was not satisfied with external worship; He demanded the heart instead. Thus, this objection refutes itself.

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## CHAPTER THREE

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### The Ceremonial Laws Given at Sinai and the State of the Church from Sinai Until Christ

After Israel's solemn entering into covenant with God, He gave laws to the partakers of His covenant—laws to which each would have to be subject. These laws are generally distinguished as follows: 1) the *moral law*, directing everyone unto a holy life; 2) the *ceremonial law*, governing man in his worship through faith in the future Messiah; and 3) the *civil law*, governing society in the form of a republic—its special focus being the maintenance of religion.

We have dealt comprehensively with the giving and contents of the *Moral Law* in volume 3, chapters 45-55. There we dealt with, among others, the following questions:

- (1) Is the *Moral Law* a covenant of works?
  - (2) Is the *Law of the Ten Commandments* a formula of the covenant of grace?
  - (3) Is the law, the covenant at Horeb, a mixed covenant—partially derived from the covenant of works and partially from the covenant of grace?
  - (4) Was the covenant made at Horeb external, typical, and national—and thus distinct from the covenant of grace?
- For our response to these questions see volume 1, chapter 16, p. 427, and volume 3, chapter 45, p. 35. We shall therefore not discuss this law any further here.

The ceremonial laws governed religion in harmony with the circumstances of that time frame, in order that by way of shadows the future Messiah and His works could be made known, and thus

lead Israel to exercise faith in Him unto their salvation. These laws can be arranged under three headings: 1) the *location* where the ceremonial acts of worship were publicly performed, which first was the tabernacle and afterwards the temple; 2) the *persons* who performed these ceremonies—the priests; and 3) the *ceremonies themselves* and the manner in which they were performed.

*The Location of Israel's Ceremonial Worship: The Tabernacle and the Temple*

The location of the ceremonial worship was first *the tabernacle*, and afterwards *the temple*. After Moses had been commanded and instructed to make the tabernacle (but prior to its completion), Moses erected a tent outside the camp where the people would congregate for religious worship until the tabernacle was constructed (Exod 33:7). David likewise made a tent for the ark until his son Solomon would build the temple, bringing the ark to this tent from the house of Obededom (cf. 2 Sam 6:17; 1 Chron 16:1). Concerning the tabernacle we must note: 1) the *pattern* after which it was constructed; 2) the *materials* from which it was made; and 3) its *structural form*, and the *tools to be used*.

The pattern of the tabernacle was neither an invention of Moses nor of any other wise builder. Rather, it was God Himself who stipulated everything from the greatest to the smallest detail. Thereby He depicted the Messiah in the clearest possible fashion. Thus, Christ is not patterned after the ceremonies, but the ceremonies are patterned after Christ. It was God's will that nothing of man would either be taken from or added to it, as the ceremonies belong to the realm of religion—a realm in which only God has a right to legislate, and where there is not the least room for any institutions of man. God revealed everything to Moses, piece by piece, emphatically commanding him to construct everything according to the exact specifications. “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount” (Exod 25:40). Likewise, God gave commandments pertaining to all the details concerning the construction of the temple, giving David a pattern of all these things by the Spirit. David, in turn, gave that pattern to his son Solomon, reassuring him that “all this ... the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern” (1 Chron 28:11-19).

Concerning the construction of the tabernacle, *the materials* used were of the most precious sort. They were the following: shittim wood (for it was not a house of stone, but rather of wood, so that it could be transported that much more efficiently), gold,

silver, precious stones, copper, fine linen, fine twined threads, the most excellent colors (such as heavenly blue, purple, and scarlet), ram skins dyed red, badger-skins, goat's hair, various items to decorate the sanctuary within, and various items to decorate the sanctuary without. All these materials were prepared in a most magnificent manner by the cunning workmen, *Bezaleel* and *Aholiab*, whom God had endowed with extraordinary wisdom for that purpose. Everyone donated these materials *voluntarily* in such an abundant measure that a proclamation had to be made that no one should bring any more. These voluntary gifts represented a value of multiple millions of pieces of gold. Add to these the half shekel contributed by every numbered male in Israel after the shekel of the sanctuary, concerning which no one was permitted to give either more or less. As the total of all the numbered men was 603,550, all of these together constituted a sum greater than could be imagined if God had not stated what it was.

Where did this more-than-royal treasure have its origin, considering that Israel was in an uninhabited wilderness? The wood was possibly hewn from an adjacent forest. Furthermore, God had blessed Israel in an extraordinary manner prior to their oppression, and He had given them the most precious things of Egypt at their exodus. You will find these materials listed in Exod 35 and 36, whereas the entire construction of the tabernacle is described in the remainder of the book. From this we may learn that everyone must contribute something to the upbuilding of God's church. The most insignificant thing is as necessary as the best thing. All must be contributed without compulsion and with a willing heart. God gives more gifts to the one than to the other. Nevertheless, the weaving of the women was as pleasing to God as was the skill of Bezaleel. Neither gold nor silver is of any avail when it comes to the redemption of souls. Jesus paid the same price for the one soul as for the other.

Concerning the *structural form* of the tabernacle, we shall present every part with the furniture and tools pertaining thereto, and add a few applications. We wish to say first, however, that we can speak with certainty about only those matters explained for us in the New Testament. In all other instances we shall proceed according to our judgment. We do not wish to debate about this, for the foundation of this is certain: The tabernacle and all it contains had been instituted by God for the ceremonial ministry.

Here we must note the *courtyard* and the tabernacle itself. The courtyard, measuring one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, was a spacious area surrounding the tabernacle, and was

encompassed with curtains made of netting, so that the people (who were not permitted to enter), while standing round about the courtyard could see what the priests did within. In this way one could also behold the gospel, Christ, and the mysteries of salvation—albeit from afar. These curtains, five cubits high, were suspended from fifty-six pillars, overlaid with silver. Thus, there was a separation between the courtyard and all that was external to it. The church is likewise separated from the world and surrounded by a wall of separation and preservation. The tabernacle had but one courtyard, whereas the temple had two—one for the priests and one for the people. Herod had constructed a third area surrounding the others, called the court of the Gentiles.

Within this courtyard was the tabernacle. Its location was most likely not in the center. The brazen altar and the laver were located at the eastern end between the gate and the tabernacle. Since the sacrifices were performed here, more space was necessary. If we determine the distance from the gate to the tabernacle as fifty cubits and the tabernacle itself being thirty cubits, a distance of twenty cubits remained at the western end (all of which adds up to one hundred cubits). This distance was one cubit more than the space on both sides of the tabernacle, where a space of nineteen cubits remained. There were nineteen cubits on the one side; the tabernacle itself was twelve cubits wide, and there were nineteen cubits remaining on the other side—adding up to fifty cubits. Inside the courtyard, between the entrance and the tabernacle, stood the brazen altar and the laver.

*The brazen altar*, made of shittim wood, was covered within and without with brass. It had a brazen grating in the middle whereby a draft could make the fire burn that much better, while allowing the ashes to fall through. The altar was square, each side being five cubits wide, and three cubits high. From each corner protruded a horn to which the sacrificial animals were bound (Ps 118:27). All the tools belonging to the altar were also made of brass, and consequently were thus suitable for their use: to withstand the fire. Neither gold nor silver were suitable in that respect. It stood in the open air between the entrance of the courtyard and the entrance of the tabernacle. It is here that the sacrificial animals were burned and the blood was sprinkled. The Lord Jesus is called an altar (Heb 13:10). In an external sense He had no glory, yet He was perfect, capable of reconciling the elect with God through His sacrifice, offered publicly before everyone's eyes, and the refuge of all who take hold of His strength. One cannot enter heaven except

he have dealings with Him—and thus enter through Him who is able to save to the uttermost all who go unto God through Him.

*The laver* also stood in the courtyard between its entrance and the tabernacle's. It was made of brass. It should be noted that it was made of the brazen mirrors of the godly women, who, instead of using glass as we do, had mirrors of polished brass which also reflected an image. The purpose of the mirror is to show the blemishes on a person's countenance, as well as to see if his clothing is properly arranged. That which served the purpose of purification was given for that very purpose. The laver was always filled with water so that the priests could wash themselves and purify the sacrificial animals. Thus, one cannot enter heaven except through the blood of Jesus unto justification and by being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Christ is the fountain that has been opened against sin and uncleanness.

*The tabernacle* itself had two chambers or compartments covered by one roof. The external layer of the roof consisted of badger skins in order to preserve the inner layers. Beneath this was another layer of ram skins dyed red and beneath this was a layer of goat's hair which constituted the tent itself. The walls, constructed of boards made of the very best shittim wood, rested on silver footings. The boards themselves were overlaid with pure gold and designed in a most artful manner. The tabernacle—thirty cubits long, twelve cubits wide, and ten cubits high—was situated in an east-west direction. Its entrance at the eastern end faced the gate of the courtyard, from which one, having passed the brazen altar and the laver, would enter the first compartment, called the *Holy Place*. From here he would continue into the second compartment, called the *Holy of Holies*. These compartments were separated from each other by an expensive and artistically designed piece of tapestry, called the veil.

This tabernacle and all that it contained was a type suitable for that time period. God—who as far as His essence is concerned does not dwell upon earth, the heavens and the heaven of heavens not being able to contain Him—is nevertheless said to dwell in an earthly sanctuary. He did so particularly between the cherubim and upon the mercy seat with an extraordinary manifestation of His presence. Yes, He Himself is a sanctuary for His people, just as the church is called the sanctuary of the Lord, in which He dwells with His grace. Believers are the temples of God, and the Holy Ghost dwells in them. However, within Christ, in whose bosom is the name of the Lord, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (in Greek: *has*

*tabernacled*).” He who has given Himself to be a sacrifice and a burnt offering, thereby being a sweetsmelling savor unto God, has entered in by way of the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Not only was the tabernacle in its entirety a type of Christ, but every part and whatever was to be found in it had reference to Him. We shall now proceed to reflect upon this.

In the *holy place* the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense were found.

The *candlestick* stood on the north side.<sup>17</sup> It was made out of one piece of pure gold, had six tubes (three on each side), the upright shaft being the seventh one. At the top of every pipe there was a lamp which was filled daily with pure olive oil. They were lit in the evening and extinguished in the morning, having snuffers and snuffdishes made of pure gold. The Lord Jesus is the candle, the light, the sun, and the morning star who illuminates His church. He is the pillar and ground of truth. He is the candlestick who always has light within Himself and manifests it, He being lit by the Holy Spirit, with whom He is anointed.

The *table of shewbread* stood on the south side.<sup>18</sup> It was made of shittim wood, was overlaid with pure gold, had a golden crown roundabout, and had a border of a handbreadth round about the table which in turn was surrounded by another golden crown. The table was two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one-and-one-half cubits high. It was covered with vessels, dishes, spoons, and covers—all made of pure gold. Loaves of bread, placed in two rows, were always on this table and were replaced every Sabbath with fresh loaves. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of Life, who by way of the precious gospel is always displayed and offered. Whoever wills may come and eat of His bread by faith and be satisfied.

The *altar of incense* was positioned centrally, a bit further into the holy place, and opposite to the ark of the covenant which stood behind the veil. It was made of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, and had a golden crown roundabout. It was square (each side being one cubit), and was two cubits high. Each morning after the lamps had been extinguished, cleaned, and refilled with oil, the incense was lit on this altar. This also occurred in the evening when the lamps were lit. When Christ, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself as a sin offering upon the cross, He was seen by everyone.

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<sup>17</sup> This contradicts Exod 40:24, “And he put the candlestick ... on the side of the tabernacle southward.”

<sup>18</sup> The table stood not on the south side, as à Brakel states, but on the north side Exod 40:22.

While upon earth, however, He more often offered prayers for His own in secret—just as He does presently in heaven, where He prays for His own without being seen. Our prayers and thanksgivings, offered before God in Christ, are as incense laid and ignited upon the golden altar which is before the throne, and are thereby pleasing to God. He who desires to go to heaven must go to the congregation of the Lord. There he will find Christ, who dwells there as within His temple. There he will receive light, be strengthened, and enjoy sweet comforts unto his refreshment.

*The Holy of Holies*, into which the High Priest entered once a year, signified Christ's entrance into heaven. Here we need to consider the veil and what was to be found in the Holy of Holies.

The *veil* was an artful and exquisite piece of tapestry made with colors of extraordinary beauty: heavenly blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, embroidered in a most skillful manner with cherubs. This veil was suspended from four pillars which rested on silver footings and were made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. It was attached at the top with golden hooks and extended from the one wall to the other. It was ten cubits high and twelve cubits wide, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This veil either had an opening through which the high priest entered or it had to be lifted on one side. In a special sense, the veil had reference to the human nature of Christ. It rent from the top to the bottom when the Lord Jesus died—His death whereby He merited eternal glory and an entrance into heaven for His people. We may thus have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:19-20). This veil signified at the same time that Christ—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—had not yet been made fully manifest; that is, He had not yet come in the flesh. Just as a shadow ceases when the body itself is present, Christ annulled all the ceremonies with His coming—all those representations which were to the benefit of the church prior to His coming.

Within the Holy of Holies was the *Ark of the Covenant*. This was a chest made of shittim wood, completely overlaid with gold and having a crown round about made of pure gold. It was two-and-one-half cubits long, a half cubit wide and one-and-one-half cubits high. It had a covering made of pure gold, called the mercyseat.<sup>19</sup> At either end of the mercy seat was a *cherub* made of pure gold, whose

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<sup>19</sup> The Dutch word is “verzoendeksel,” that is, “the covering of atonement.”

elevated wings were bent toward each other and whose countenances gazed toward the mercy seat. It was there that God revealed His gracious presence; therefore He is said to dwell between the cherubims. Within the ark were *the tables* upon which God had written the ten commandments, as well as the *golden pot* containing an omer of manna and *Aaron's rod* that had blossomed. In 1 Kings 8:9 mention is made only of the two tables of the law, whereas in Heb 9:4 the golden pot and Aaron's rod are also mentioned. The reason for this is that in Hebrews Paul speaks of the tabernacle; however, the reference in 1 Kings 8:9 is to the temple. Paul also posits that the *golden censer* was in the Holy of Holies—either kept there and removed on the Day of Atonement, or restricted for use only in the Holy of Holies. The Lord Jesus is ἰλαστήριον (*hylasterion*); that is, He Himself is the *atonement* by His blood. He delivers His people from the curse of the law, accomplishes the law for them, and clothes them with holiness. The Father is pleased in Him as Surety; therefore He is said to dwell upon the mercy seat, between the cherubims. The angels are desirous to observe Christ in the execution of His suretyship. Therein they behold God's perfections and glorify Him in response thereto, teaching us also to look unto Jesus continually.

*The Persons who Performed the Ceremonies: The Priests and Levites*

Having considered the location where the ceremonial worship occurred, we shall now proceed to consider the ceremonial persons, the *priests*, and the service they performed. As far as we know there was no law prior to Moses regulating who would sacrifice and administer the holy things. The fathers of the families generally did this. Nevertheless, everyone was free to do so; it was by no means the exclusive privilege of the firstborn. God claimed the firstborn for Himself after He had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians and had spared the children of Israel. This was, however, not for the purpose of ministering in holy things, for God had also claimed the firstborn of the beasts for Himself. These, men as well as beasts, God claimed for Himself, and were therefore not permitted to be counted among the congregation. After the Lord chose the tribe of Levi, however, the firstborn of men and beasts had to be redeemed with money and be purchased from the Lord.

God did not reject the firstborn because of the sin with the golden calf, as evidenced by the fact that Aaron and his sons were already chosen to the priesthood prior to this incident. Also, thereafter, the firstborn remained the Lord's as a perpetual institution, for else they could not have been redeemed. Furthermore,

it is stated nowhere that the firstborn had made themselves guilty of this sin. It is a fact that the firstborn, who were then still small and young, could not have done so—and thus could also not have been rejected for this. Moreover, it is also not recorded anywhere that God rejected the firstborn because of the sin of the golden calf. Did God then also reject the firstborn of the cattle because of this sin? Were they no longer permitted to be placed on the altar? Nevertheless, the firstborn of the beasts of the Levites took the place of all firstborn animals (Num 3:41). When it is written in Num 3:12, “And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn,” then the reference is to proprietorship rather than ministry in the sanctuary. The tribe of Levi was not chosen in its entirety to sacrifice and enter the sanctuary; this was true only for Aaron and his sons. God had given the beasts of the Levites in the stead of all the firstborn among the beasts of the children of Israel. Nevertheless they remained the Lord’s. The unclean among them had to be redeemed, but not the clean animals; they had to be brought to the sanctuary. There they were killed and part of the animal was sacrificed upon the altar, whereas the other part had to be eaten before the countenance of the Lord (cf. Num 18:17; Deut 12:6-17; Deut 14:23). Moreover, the role of the firstborn in the inheritance in Canaan did not agree with ministering in the sanctuary. It would have hindered them in their task. It was therefore not an angry rejection of the firstborn, but rather a promotion.

The tribe of Levi, having been chosen for the holy ministry, was divided into common Levites and priests. The common Levites did not enter into the sanctuary, but assisted the priests. They had no inheritance in Canaan, for the Lord was their inheritance; they lived from the sanctuary. The *priests*, by way of a lawful marriage, had to be descendants of Aaron, for they and their sons were called to that office by the Lord. Their calling was confirmed by the blossoming of Aaron’s rod and its bearing of almonds. They were therefore very careful in preserving their genealogy. Thus, after the Babylonian captivity, some claimed to belong to the priestly family but were not able to produce their genealogy; they were barred from the priesthood as unclean persons. Not only did the priests have to be descendants of Aaron, but they also had to have a perfect body—without blemish. If anyone had a visible or secret blemish, he was not permitted to minister in the priest’s office, even though he was a descendant of Aaron. He was not permitted to take a harlot, a desecrated woman, or a rejected

woman as his wife. Furthermore, the high priest was forbidden to take a widow to wife. He was only permitted to take a virgin.

There was a distinction between the common priests and the one high priest. The *common priests*, upon the express command of God to David, were divided into twenty-four ranks. These ranks did not pertain to worthiness or superiority, but only to the time and order of ministry. At the head of each rank or class was a *chief priest*. The high priest was not elected upon the death of the predecessor. Rather, his son—or in the absence of a son, his nearest relative—took his place by reason of birth.

The priestly order was not inaugurated by way of oath-swearing; nevertheless it was done in a very solemn manner. Aaron and his sons were led to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. There Moses washed them with water from the laver and dressed them with the holy garments. He caused them to place their hands upon the head of the heifer to be slain as a sin offering. Following this, a ram was slain for a burnt offering, after which another ram was brought forward. Aaron and his sons would place their hands upon its head; it was then slain. Moses would apply the blood of this ram to the earlobe, the right thumb, and the right great toe. The blood was also sprinkled upon them and upon their clothing. This was followed by the sacrificing of the ram of consecration. Moses then anointed them with the holy oil which had been skillfully prepared from the most eminent spices: pure myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. There was to be no imitation of this holy oil by anyone, nor was anyone permitted to anoint himself with it. Its smell, signifying both ordination and qualification, was not to be upon anyone except those upon whom it had to be according to God's command. Aaron and his sons were not only installed into their offices, but at the same time into the priesthood in its entirety, which also encompassed all their descendants. Therefore, a renewed anointing did not occur each time. Nevertheless, there was a difference between the anointing of Aaron as high priest and the anointing of his sons, the common priests. The difference was this: The anointing oil was poured out upon Aaron's head in such an abundant measure that it descended upon his beard and from there to the hem of his garments—that is, the upper hem which was near his neck. His sons, however, were sprinkled with the anointing oil in like manner as they were anointed with the blood of the ram—be it individually or as a group. There was also a difference between the garments of the high priest and the common priests. They wore these garments (which were kept in a dressing room) only while they were serving.

They were made in a very skillful and splendid manner. The common priests had linen garments, whereas the high priest had two sets of garments. One was made of linen and was worn on the great Day of Atonement when entering into the Holy of Holies. However, when he entered the holy place on any day other than the Day of Atonement, he would wear the most eminent, beautiful, and elegant garments wrought with gold. These garments consisted of a robe, a coat with pomegranates and golden bells hanging on the bottom thereof, an ephod with two stones upon the shoulder pieces, a breastplate attached to the ephod which contained twelve stones whereon the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraven (which also contained the *Urim* and *Thummim*), a curiously wrought girdle, a beautiful mitre, and upon his forehead a golden plate on which was engraved: *Holiness to the Lord*.

The entire priesthood, and particularly the high priest, was a glorious type of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle subsequently shows us in his letter to the Hebrews. Furthermore, each particular matter had its specific meaning. However, we do not presume to be an expositor of each particular. We do indeed have our thoughts concerning this subject, and find meditation thereon a sweet work, but as we cannot speak about it with certainty, we shall remain silent, leaving everyone free in his thoughts concerning this. I wish to neither concur nor contradict, since we would not be able to agree with others in all things.

### *The Ceremonies Themselves*

Having spoken of the location where the ceremonies were performed and of the persons who functioned as types, it remains yet to speak of the *ceremonies themselves*, which preeminently consisted of the sacrifices—noting the things which were sacrificed and the sacrifice itself.

First, the sacrifices consisted of 1) four-footed, clean animals such as heifers, oxen, cows, sheep, and goats; 2) birds, such as doves and turtledoves; and 3) the fruits of the field, such as green ears, dried flowers, oil, frankincense, salt, and wine.

Secondly, as far as the sacrifices themselves were concerned, there was great variety.

(1) As far as manner and purpose were concerned, there were the *offerings by fire* which were burned by the fire which came down from heaven and was continually maintained: the burnt offering, meat offering, drink offering, offering of consecration, sin offering, trespass offering, thank offering, peace offering, and the memorial offering.

(2) As far as time was concerned, there were the daily *morning* and *evening sacrifices*, and the sacrifices upon the *Sabbath*, *new moon*, *feast days*, and the *Day of Atonement*. There were also sacrifices offered at the occasion of committed sins or defilement; for the cleansing of an impurity; or if someone were inclined to offer a freewill offering to the Lord.

(3) Regarding persons, there were sacrifices for priests, elders, the entire congregation, the common man, the rich or the poor. Such a person would enter the courtyard with the sacrificial animal and go as far as the brazen altar. There, while confessing his sins, he would lay his hands upon the sacrificial animal, after which the priest would take and sacrifice it in accordance with the nature of the sacrifice. Some were burned completely and some partially. In the latter case, the remains were for the priest and for him on whose behalf it had been sacrificed. They would then eat these remains before the countenance of the Lord.

(4) All these sacrifices were excelled by *the sacrifices of the High Priest upon the great Day of Atonement*. The high priest had to wash himself with water, put on the holy linen garments rather than his beautiful garments, and then take a heifer both for himself and for his house. He had to take two goats from the congregation, cast the lot upon them, and then sacrifice one as a sin offering and present the other alive to the Lord; afterwards he would send it away into the wilderness. He would then have to kill the heifer and with its blood and his censer enter into the Holy of Holies. Once there, he would create a cloud of incense by placing the incense upon the fire in his censer. He would then take of the blood of the heifer and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy seat, thereby making reconciliation for himself and for his house. The high priest would thereupon exit and take the ram which was for the people, kill it, and carry its blood and the censer into the Holy of Holies. He would then perform the identical procedure as he did with the blood of the heifer, thereby making reconciliation for the sins of the people. Thereafter he would take the blood, both of the heifer as well as of the ram, and apply it to the horns of the altar by sprinkling it with his finger seven times. He would thus accomplish the ministry of the sanctuary, where from the moment he entered until the moment he exited, no person—not even a priest—was to be present. Thereafter he would take the living goat and lay his hands upon its head. He then directed someone to send it into the wilderness. Thus, in regard to the day, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies once in a year; that is, at no other time but on the Day of

Atonement. However, on that very day he would enter twice: first for himself and thereafter for the people.

In addition to these laws, God had given many other institutions pertaining to the conduct of every individual—relative to clothing, foods, clean or unclean animals, and also pertaining to pollution and purity. The purpose of all these laws was the preservation of the people’s health according to the body, while also instructing them about the impurity of the soul.

We have thus briefly presented the most important elements of the ceremonial worship. All these ceremonies were not given for the purpose of being justified before God and to please Him with the performance of these acts. The apostle makes this plain in his letter to the Hebrews. Instead, they were given to depict the Savior who was to come—to display Him in a lively manner in His holy nature, suffering, and death, as well as in His efficacy to bring about the reconciliation of believers with God and to merit eternal salvation. Herein is manifested the unsearchable wisdom of God, His awesome holiness, His wondrous goodness, and His faithful care for His adopted people. The Lord gave the priests and prophets, whom he sent time and again, the knowledge and ability to explain the types to the people and thus to lead them to Christ—as the godly indeed were acquainted with the types and thereby believed in Christ. We have spoken of this and presented Christ in His priestly administration in volume one, chapter 20, “The High-Priestly Office of Christ,” and will speak of this further in the next chapter. We shall show that these types were already instituted prior to the sin with the golden calf, and subsequently did not receive another form. The types did not become punishments for this sin, but solely were and remained evangelical blessings. On the other hand, however, one cannot read without being emotionally stirred about the wickedness, unbelief, distrust, and idolatry of that people toward whom the Lord had manifested so much goodness and longsuffering.

It was God’s will that this divinely instituted worship would be maintained without change until Christ, the substance of the shadows, would come, at which time it would have served its purpose and be annulled. How little came of this observance will become evident when we briefly sketch the state of the church in the wilderness, in Canaan under the rule of the judges, under the rule of the kings, and thereafter during the captivity in Babylon and the return which followed—until the days of Christ.

#### Israel’s Grievous Conduct in Response to Their Gospel Privileges

That people who had seen so many of the wondrous deeds of

the Lord in Egypt—that people who had experienced the wonder of the separation of the waters of the sea, having crossed its bottom dryshod, and witnessed the drowning of Pharaoh and his host—that people who had seen the hand of God in the changing of the bitter water into sweet water, in having (without sowing or harvesting) fresh supplies rained down daily from heaven, in providing a rock to bring forth water abundantly, in satisfying them for a month with the flesh of quails, covering the camp by reason of their quantity, and in defeating Amalek before their countenance, whereas humanly speaking, Amalek would have slaughtered them as a flock of defenseless sheep—that people who only recently had so solemnly entered into covenant with their God and subsequently had heard God’s voice pronouncing the ten commandments—*that* people became repugnant and immediately involved themselves in idolatry. For, after Moses had ascended the mountain and did not return for forty days, the people thought that he would never return. They wanted to serve the Lord in a manner pleasing to themselves. They wanted a physical object by which to serve God, and said to Aaron: “Make us gods.” They gave him their golden earrings which he melted and fashioned into a calf. He did this either to mock with them or to imitate the idolatry of Egypt. He also built an altar for the calf, whereupon the people offered burnt and peace offerings, sat down to eat, and arose to dance and to play. When Moses subsequently entered the camp, he, with vehement zeal for the Lord, broke the two tables of stone which the Lord had given him with the law inscribed upon them, because the people had broken the covenant with their God. Moses then ground the calf to powder, sprinkled this powder upon the water, and caused the people to drink it. Upon the command to take vengeance upon the idolaters, those who were zealous for the Lord fell upon the camp and killed about three thousand men. Subsequently, God refused to go up with Israel; however, He permitted Himself to be entreated by Moses. Then Moses again ascended the mountain with two tables of stone he had made at the command of God. He again remained there forty days, and God wrote His law upon these tables. Moses then descended the mountain once more, having the new tables in his hands—and behold, his countenance, without his knowledge, shone to such an extent that the people were afraid to look at him. Since they could not endure this radiance, he covered his face when he spoke with them.

*The Old Testament Church During the Forty Years in the Wilderness*

Shortly after all that had transpired at Mount Sinai, Moses proceeded

with Israel to Canaan. Having arrived in its immediate proximity, Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan. When these spies returned from Canaan and brought up an evil report that the people were too mighty and the cities too strong for Israel to conquer, the people immediately began to murmur and rebel. They wanted to appoint a leader to return to Egypt, and desired to stone Moses. God wanted to kill the people, but once more He was entreated. Nevertheless, God killed the spies (Joshua and Caleb being the exceptions) who had been sent forth and discouraged the people from marching toward Canaan. God then declared that they would now wander for forty years in the wilderness, that they would all die in the wilderness, and that He would give Canaan as a possession to their children. When they heard this, they wanted to invade the land despite the warning of Moses. Though they began courageously, they were thoroughly defeated.

It did not take long before that stiffnecked people relapsed into bitterness and murmuring against God. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram stirred up the people against Moses and Aaron. As a punishment for this offense, they descended alive into the earth with their families and possessions. The people, instead of fearing the Lord, rose up against Moses and Aaron, saying that they had killed those men. Upon this, God sent a plague into the camp which consumed fourteen thousand seven hundred people in a moment. However, the Lord permitted Himself to be entreated once more. He stayed the plague and confirmed Aaron's calling to the priestly office by causing his staff (which had been laid up before the countenance of the Lord along with the staffs of the other tribes) to blossom and bring forth almonds.

However, the people continued to murmur against the Lord and to rise up against Moses. In response, God sent fiery serpents among them, resulting in the death of many people. God permitted Himself to be entreated once more and commanded Moses to construct *a brazen serpent*, which, due to its smoothness and coppery color, resembled one of those fiery serpents. He was then directed to erect this serpent upon a pole, so that if any who had been bitten by a serpent looked upon the brazen serpent, he would live. A sin such as this engenders a penalty according to its nature. This brazen serpent would stimulate them to think of the first sin, committed upon the suggestion of the serpent. Their depravity proceeded from this sin, and all their evil deeds toward the Lord proceeded from this depravity. Herein was the reason they were punished with serpents. At the same time, the raising of the serpent upon a pole would be suitable to cause them to look forward to the Redeemer to come. Indeed, in retrospect, we can observe (the Lord Jesus having explicated it as such Himself) that as

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up—that is, be hung on the pole of the cross. The serpent itself does not come into consideration. It is neither a type of nor an allusion to Christ. Rather, it is the lifting up of the serpent and the crucifixion of Christ which resemble each other.

After Israel had wandered in the wilderness for a lengthy period of time, they again approached Canaan—from a different side than the former time. They did so after a period during which they were guilty of much bitterness toward and tempting of the Lord, who with great longsuffering had borne with them for those forty years. He did not cease to give them bread from heaven and water from the rock, while shielding them during the day from the scorching heat of the sun with a cloud, which at night also functioned as an illuminating fire. Thus, their lives were perpetuated by means of miracles. Balak, king of the Moabites, then hired Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam was indeed a prophet, but he lived an ungodly life, having a love for the wages of unrighteousness. Even though he desired the money, Balaam nevertheless did not want to go unless God permitted him to do so. After much pleading for permission, God did permit him to go. During his journey, he was met by an angel, who appeared to be intent on killing him. The donkey upon which Balaam rode saw the angel, and repeatedly turned aside until she could no longer do so. The donkey laid down, and when beaten by Balaam, she rebuked him, speaking in human language. Thereupon Balaam saw the angel, after which he offered to return. He did receive permission to proceed, however, with the stipulation that he would say nothing else but what the Lord commanded him. Thus he who came to curse Israel blessed Israel; and as he sought to get permission to be able to curse, moving from one place to the other, he was compelled to bless time and again. Perceiving that he could not obtain the money, he suggested the evil advice to seduce Israel to commit physical and spiritual fornication, that is, idolatry. For having given this counsel, he was later punished by being put to death with the sword of the children of Israel. His advice bore fruit. Israel committed fornication with the daughters of the Moabites, linked itself with Baalpeor in idolatry, and bowed itself before the idols. God then commanded that the guilty one be punished with death. The princes of the people who took the initiative in this transgression were hung at sunrise, whereas the others were put to death. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, being informed that a man of Israel was lying with a Moabitish woman, entered into their tent. Driven by a holy zeal, he put both to death. Hereby he pleased God, who had commanded that such be put to death. God then commanded that war be waged against the Moabites

in retaliation for their seduction, and gave Og, the king of Bashan, and Sihon, the king who dwelt at Heshbon, into the hands of Israel. The Israelites put everything to death, destroyed all the cities in their land, and took all the land and cattle into their possession. The tribes of Reuben and Gad requested that these lands be given them as an inheritance, stating that they would not inherit anything on the other side of Jordan—promising, however, to help conquer it. Moses bestowed these two kingdoms as an inheritance upon the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. This was the initial bestowal of their inheritance.

Thereafter Moses ascended the heights of Mount Pisgah, where God showed him the land of Canaan. He saw it from afar and requested that he might enter; however, God refused him. After having completed his task of leading Israel, and after having made known to them that he would die, he ascended Mount Nebo at the heights of Pisgah. There he died, being one hundred twenty years old and having his full strength. God buried him in a valley, so that no one has ever known where he was buried. When the devil wanted to unearth the body of Moses, he was prevented from doing so by Michael, the archangel. And thus Moses, whose faithfulness Paul magnifies in Heb 3:5, completed his great work and life—however, not as a type of the Lord Jesus. Rather, he resembles Christ as servant and as lord. In retrospect, there are indeed similarities between Moses and Christ which might be applied. However, similarity does not constitute something to be a type. A type must be divinely designated as such, which is lacking in this instance.

#### *The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Judges*

Following the death of Moses, Israel was governed by *Judges*. The first was *Joshua*, who, while Moses was yet alive, had already been appointed by God to be the successor. As long as Joshua was alive, Israel fared well and lived according to the instituted form of worship. Joshua sent two spies who, upon arriving in Jericho, spent the night in the house of Rahab. She shared with them the perplexity of the people, granted them lodging, and secretly permitted them to escape after they had promised to spare her and whoever would be in her house when the children of Israel would conquer Jericho. Upon their return, the spies related everything to Joshua, who upon God's command marched forward with the people. The ark, carried by the priests, went before them, and as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the Jordan separated and Israel crossed dryshod as they previously had done at the Red Sea. Joshua then took twelve stones from the Jordan and placed them

near the brink of the river as a memorial. This place was called *Gilgal* (that is, a turn), because the Lord had turned the shame of Egypt from them and elevated them to a position of honor and respect. At Gilgal the entire nation of Israel was circumcised, for circumcision had been neglected in the wilderness. There they also observed the Passover with unleavened bread and ate the corn of the land, at which time the falling of manna ceased. Joshua, having been strengthened upon the appearance of the Lord Jesus to him, marched forward to conquer Canaan. Arriving at Jericho, the city walls collapsed of themselves, after the ark and the men of war had gone about the city for seven days—one time each day, and seven times upon the seventh day. They conquered the city and destroyed all that was to be found in it, except for Rahab and all who were in her house. Contrary to God's command, Achan took of the accursed thing, for which reason Israel failed in her quest of Ai. Thirty-six men perished, causing the heart of Israel to melt and become as water due to their distrust of the Lord. Joshua, having been strengthened by the Lord, encouraged Israel and punished Achan. Ai was then conquered. The Gibeonites, being fearful, feigned to come from a far land and made peace with Israel. Five Canaanitish kings then conspired to eradicate Gibeon; however, the Lord gave these kings into the hands of Israel and slew them with great hailstones from heaven. In order to eradicate them to an even greater extent, upon Joshua's request the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still. Thereafter all the kings of Canaan gathered against Israel; however, they were completely routed and Israel conquered all of Canaan. Joshua then divided the land among the tribes of Israel by the casting of the lot. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh were sent home, having already received their inheritance, at which time they built an altar on the other side of the Jordan. When the other tribes heard of this, they came up against them, thinking that they had involved themselves in idolatry. This is how zealous they were at that time! Once they understood the true reason for it, they returned home to their inheritance. Soon afterward, Joshua, having earnestly exhorted Israel, died at the age of one hundred ten years.

After the death of Joshua, Israel corrupted itself exceedingly. The people departed from the Lord, became involved in all manner of idolatry and served the gods of the nations whose lands they had conquered—many of whom they had not destroyed, contrary to God's command. The wrath of the Lord was therefore kindled against Israel, so that the people were not able to resist those who stood up against them—and then Israel became a spoil to all.

Among those who had dominion over them were the following: 1) Cush, the king of Mesopotamia; 2) Eglon, king of the Moabites; 3) Jabin, the king of the Canaanites; 4) the Midianites; and 5) the Philistines. There were also civil wars whereby Israel destroyed itself. Thus, Israel was often in a more miserable condition in Canaan than they ever had been in Egypt.

However, the Lord did not want to eliminate His people. Therefore He sent them judges time and again to deliver Israel out of the hand of their enemies. Israel persisted, however, in departing from the Lord and in engaging in the most abominable forms of idolatry. Sometimes they gave heed to the judges in some measure; but generally this was not so, even though the Lord delivered them time and again. The judges whom the Lord gave did not succeed each other without intermission. Rather, God raised them up each time when the need was most acute. Then, after Israel had been delivered, their rest would not be of long duration. The longest period during which the land was at peace was eighty years.

The judges were the following:

(1) Joshua.

(2) Othniel.

(3) Ehud.

(4) Deborah, who made use of Barak, cursed Meroz because this people did not come to battle, and praised the heroine, Jael, who, with a hammer, drove a large nail through the head of Sisera.

(5) Gideon, who, with three hundred men, defeated the entire army of the Midianites.

(6) Abimelech, who, during a civil war, was killed by a woman who threw a large stone from the city wall, crushing his skull.

(7) Tola.

(8) Jair.

(9) Jephthah, who made an ill advised vow that he, were he to return victoriously, would sacrifice to the Lord as a burnt offering the very first thing coming to him from his house, thinking that this could but be a heifer, sheep, or goat. It proved to be his own daughter—and thus, had he indeed killed her, would have responded to God's blessing with an abominable act.

(10) Ibzan.

(11) Elon.

(12) Abdon.

(13) Samson, who according to a promise made by an angel, was born to Manoah and his wife. He performed many wondrous deeds to the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines. In the end, he was betrayed by the harlot Delilah and lost his eyes. Upon

taking vengeance for his eyes he caused the idol temple to collapse, thereby killing himself along with a large multitude of Philistines.

(14) Israel having degenerated to practice the worst sort of ungodliness, God raised up *Samuel*, the prophet. The ark of the Lord, having been preserved—either because it was hidden by the Israelites, or because the enemies, by divine direction, had too much respect for this sacred object—was brought into the camp of the children of Israel, whereby the Israelites assured themselves of victory. They were defeated, however, and the ark was captured. God plagued the Philistines for this in such a measure that they returned the ark. From that time forward, Israel's condition improved due to Samuel's government. He appointed his sons to be judges, but they conducted themselves in an unfaithful manner, thereby prompting Israel to demand a king. They indeed received one after having been sharply rebuked by God through Samuel.

As far as the external condition of Israel was concerned, matters had degenerated to such an extent that there was no blacksmith to be found in Israel. Anyone who therefore needed something constructed or sharpened had to go to the Philistines. Consequently, the Philistines oppressed Israel to such an extent that they could make neither sword nor spear. With the advent of the kings, however, Israel's outward manifestation improved.

#### *The Old Testament Church During the Reign of Saul, David, and Solomon*

Israel's first king was *Saul*. He was indeed a capable statesman, but in regard to religion he was a failure. Saul used religion for his own advantage. Since he laid hands on religion in this way, he was rejected of God. He gathered an army of 330,000 men to deliver Jabesh in Gilead. There was, however, no one who had a sword, except Saul and his son Jonathan. Nevertheless, God gave the enemies into his hands and he prospered everywhere, delivering Israel to a large extent from the hand of the Philistines. However, for having assaulted and killed the priests, God caused him to perish during a battle with the Philistines. This occurred in such a manner that he became his own executioner by thrusting himself through. He reigned for thirteen years.

The second king of Israel was *David*, who hailed from the tribe of Judah. He was a valiant war hero who not only delivered Israel from the hands of her enemies, but also had dominion over many nations, which were thus included in his territory. He thereby brought Israel to the pinnacle of glory and renown. In addition, he was an eminently God-fearing king, a man after God's own heart.

The church, being the object of all his delight and care, was brought to a noble and orderly condition. Upon God's command, he organized the priests into twenty-four ranks, who, each at their own time, performed the holy service. He brought the ark to Jerusalem and erected a tent for it until a temple for worship was built. It was his intention to do this himself; therefore he amassed a vast treasury of gold, silver, copper, and whatever else could be of use for such a great and glorious building. It was not God's will, however, that David would do so, because he had shed much blood in all the wars he had fought. Nevertheless, his desire and intention were pleasing to the Lord, who promised him that the Messiah would be born from his seed. God also gave him a pattern after which his son Solomon would build the temple. Having brought both church and state into a flourishing condition, David died after reigning forty years.

Israel's third king was *Solomon*, who was full of wisdom and was granted riches, honor, and glory. He found the kingdom at peace, possessed it in peace, and left it in peace. He was pleasing to the Lord, and He therefore directed the prophet Nathan to call him *Jedidiah*. It is he who built the temple, doing so primarily after the pattern of the tabernacle. However, it was much greater and more glorious. Thus, it excelled all the wonders of the world in design, beauty, and glory. Solomon reigned forty years.

During the reigns of David and Solomon, the church of the Old Testament reached her pinnacle of glory. Immediately after Solomon's death, she rapidly lost her luster and purity. The kingdom was divided into two sections. Ten tribes defected from the house of David and retained the name "Israel." The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, being neighbors, united with each other, as they had become virtually intermixed. Thus, even a portion of Jerusalem belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. These remained with the house of David and were called the Kingdom of Judah.

#### *The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Divided Kingdom*

The first king of Israel was *Jeroboam*, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. In order to keep his subjects away from Jerusalem, and thus from observing the religious worship instituted by God in the temple, he designated two cities—*Dan* and *Bethel*—to be centers of worship. In each locality he placed an idol—a golden calf. Since the priests had left Israel, having defected to Judah and Jerusalem, he took a number of evil men and bribed them to become priests. In order not to draw the people away from

true religion too rapidly, Jeroboam imitated the true form of worship to some extent by appointing a feast on the very day that a feast of the Lord would be celebrated in Jerusalem. Furthermore, he offered sacrifices to the idols at Dan and Bethel. He thus seduced Israel into idolatry. All his royal successors followed in his footsteps; consequently Israel did not have a single good king. Rather, she had only ungodly kings, by which the entire kingdom fell into idolatry—albeit God preserved His own even under their reign. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years.

The second king was *Nadab*, who reigned two years. The third was *Baasha* (23 years); the fourth *Elah* (1 year); the fifth *Zimri* (7 days); the sixth *Omri* (11 years); the seventh *Ahab* (12 years); the eighth *Ahaziah* (2 years); the ninth *Joram* (12 years); the tenth *Jehu* (28 years); the eleventh *Jehoahaz*, who as yet called upon the Lord when he was oppressed (16 years); the twelfth *Jehoash* (16 years); the thirteenth *Jeroboam II* (41 years); the fourteenth *Zachariah* (6 months); the fifteenth *Shallum* (1 month); the sixteenth *Menahem* (10 years); the seventeenth *Pekahiah* (2 years); the eighteenth *Pekah* (20 years); and the nineteenth *Hoshea* (9 years). It was then that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, conquered Samaria with the entire kingdom of Israel, and led it captive to his nation. These tribes never returned to their land, but were partly assimilated among the Gentiles. A remnant did gradually return to Jerusalem and dwelt throughout Judah, whereas another part remained dispersed while maintaining the Jewish religion—as is now true for the entire nation. That which the Jews fabricate concerning the ten tribes are fables. Thus, the entire kingdom of Israel was annihilated.

The kingdom of Judah had twenty-three kings, all of whom were direct descendants of David. The fourth king was *Rehoboam*, who with his subjects, departed from God and did that which was evil in His sight. He reigned seventeen years. The fifth king was *Abijah* (3 years); the sixth king was the God-fearing *Asa* (41 years); the seventh king was the God-fearing *Jehoshaphat* (25 years); the eighth king was *Jehoram*, who was an ungodly king (8 years, four of which were together with his father); the ninth was the ungodly *Ahaziah* (1 year); the tenth was *Athaliah*, the mother of Ahaziah, even though the kingdom belonged to Joash (6 years); the eleventh king was *Joash*, who was brought to the throne by his uncle Jehoiada, the high priest, when he was seven years old (40 years). Joash was a good king as long as Jehoiada lived, but thereafter he was an ungodly king. The twelfth king was *Amaziah*, who at first reigned well, but not with a perfect heart—which he subsequently revealed in his ungodly deeds (29 years); the thirteenth was *Uzziah*,

who partially reigned well, but when he laid hands on that which was holy, the Lord smote him with leprosy (52 years); the fourteenth king was *Jotham*, who was godly (16 years); the fifteenth was *Ahaz*, who was exceedingly ungodly (16 years); the sixteenth was the godly *Hezekiah* (22 years); the seventeenth was *Manasseh*, who was first ungodly and thereafter repented (55 years); the eighteenth was *Amon*, who was ungodly (2 years); the nineteenth was the godly *Josiah* (31 years); the twentieth was *Jehoahaz* (3 months); the twenty-first was the ungodly *Jehoiakim* (11 years); the twenty-second was the ungodly *Jehoiachin* (3 months); and the twenty-third was the ungodly *Zedekiah* (11 years).

During Zedekiah's reign, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and all of Judah was taken captive to Babylon. Thus, subsequent to the time of David and Solomon, Judah had only five or six kings who made it their business to reform religious worship and the people. However, the ungodly kings were in the majority. The church became very corrupt, and often did not even exhibit the appearance of godliness—generally being totally immersed in abominable idolatry. Even though the Lord had sent many prophets to them who very earnestly and boldly rebuked, warned, admonished, and instructed them (whereby the godly were stirred up and comforted), the people nevertheless stubbornly persevered in their idolatry. At all times there have been many godly in the church of the Old Testament. So it was during the time of Elijah, who believed that he alone was left, whereas there remained yet seven thousand, that is, many thousands. How great must the number of the godly have been then during the time of David, Solomon, and other pious kings! There is thus reason to esteem the church of the Old Testament in some respects; on the other hand there is reason to be amazed about the longsuffering of God concerning such an ungodly people.

#### *The Old Testament Church During the Period of the Babylonian Captivity*

After many threats, God sent Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who destroyed Canaan, Jerusalem, the temple, and everything else. He removed the spoil and the entire population to Babylon into slavery. There they mourned and wept when they thought of Zion. The temple and religion, for which they had previously no desires, had now become precious and desirable to them. Nevertheless, God was good to them and gave prophets who supported and comforted them concerning their future restoration. Frequently the Lord caused them to find grace in the eyes of

their captors. They were assigned to a rugged area in order to cultivate it; thereby the majority of the Jews remained together. It was also to the advantage of the teaching and preserving of the true religion. As they lived in subjection to the heads of the families in their appointed land, there were also prominent individuals at the court of the king who promoted their welfare. Among those was *Daniel*, who, by divine direction, was highly respected at the court of the king. The Jews remained in this captivity for a period of seventy years—which, generally speaking, constitutes the longest portion of a man's life. Just as God did not want those who left Egypt to arrive in Canaan, but rather their children, God likewise did not want those who had been exiled for their sins to be brought back to Canaan. They died in Babylon instead—with the exception of some who returned at a very great age together with the children of those who had died. These still had memories of the temple of Solomon. Even though it seemed highly improbable that the Jews would ever be restored to their land again, nevertheless the Lord, who has the hearts of kings in His hands and for whom nothing is too wonderful, did cause them to return after the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah had been completed. He did so by means of *Cyrus*, who long before had already been identified by name. Yes, not only did the people return, but the holy vessels of the temple were also returned to them. This was in order that they might be used in the service of the Lord in that temple for which they had received permission and commandment to rebuild.

The return from Babylon occurred in a similar fashion to the exile. The exile first pertained to a few, and thereafter to all. Likewise, all the people did not return at once—yes, many never returned, even though they were at liberty to do so. Instead, they remained voluntarily in exile, being more fond of their earthly possessions than of Canaan and pure religion—even though the majority adhered to the Jewish religion and remained isolated without intermingling with the heathen. As Israel left Egypt with great riches, so did they when they left Babylon. They departed under the direction of Zerubbabel, the prince from the seed of David; Joshua the high priest; Nehemiah, the man of zeal; and others. Their first task was to build the altar and offer the morning and evening sacrifices thereon. Subsequently, they zealously undertook the task of building the walls of Jerusalem, which, to everyone's amazement, was accomplished in a very short time. The foundation for the temple was also laid, but the building of the temple itself proceeded slowly, as everyone worked primarily on

his own house. The Lord rebuked them concerning this by means of the prophet Haggai. The second temple was a much simpler structure than the first, and thus the elderly who had seen the first temple wept when they looked upon the foundation. Furthermore, there were several things absent which were present in the first temple. Nevertheless, the glory of the latter temple would be greater than that of the first, since the substance of all shadows, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be present there. With His radiance He would drive away all darkness.

*The Old Testament Church During the Inter-testamental Period*

Also after the return there was little rest and unity. The princes of the house of David had little authority. The high priests assumed too much power in political matters, so that at last they gained the upper hand and, during the Maccabean period, took over the entire government. The people of Israel were oppressed by the wicked Antiochus, so that there was neither rest nor stability anywhere in Israel. At last Israel became subject to the Roman emperor, who, by means of Herod, provided government and external rest. After the return from Babylon, we do not read that the Jews returned to idolatry. Religious affairs were more diligently managed and maintained in accordance with the divine precepts given by Moses than ever was the case since Israel entered Canaan. However, the church became overrun with hypocrisy, superstition, and a variety of errors. The most prominent proponents of these were the Pharisees (the least serious error), the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

If one thus observes the church in Canaan from its inception to its conclusion, one must be amazed that Canaan is designated as a type of heaven. There is no resemblance between the two; there is nothing but dissimilarity. Nevertheless one can and may make sweet comparisons and consider the journey of the children of Israel to be an allusion to the journey of God's children to heaven—a journey in which they encounter both tribulations as well as divine deliverances of the soul, experiencing these while in the body. Canaan can be alluded to as representing all that pertains to the flesh—that is, when in the world all is at its very best, it is yet sorrow and grief; and also that one neither ought to seek nor expect rest here below. Furthermore, a consideration of the state of the church during the Old Testament will cause one to perceive how the glory of the New Testament church excels that of the Old Testament church. One rightfully complains about the wretched condition of the church in our days, when comparing it with the

perception of what she ought to be. When comparing her with the church of the Old Testament, however, the very worst of that which is in truth is far better than the best at that time. We have therefore reason to thank and magnify the Lord.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

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### *The Nature of the Suretyship of Jesus Christ During the Old Testament*

Thus far we have considered the state of the church during the Old Testament in general terms. Presently we shall consider the state of believers in particular, as there are various opinions among the Reformed concerning this. We shall present them in an orderly fashion by dealing with some questions pertaining to 1) the Surety and 2) Old Testament believers. In this chapter we shall speak of the nature of this Suretyship.

#### *Conflicting Views Examined*

The following questions need to be considered: Did the Lord Jesus take upon Himself and fully remove from Old Testament believers their guilt and punishment? Did He do so by obligating Himself before God, in accordance with His will, to make satisfaction for them? Or did these believers remain subject to their guilt and punishment by consequence of God reserving for Himself the authority, right, and liberty to punish their sins in them until the Surety would have made satisfaction?

These are the main issues as well as the reason for the subsequent differences of opinion. The very honor of the Lord Jesus is at stake. First we shall consider the various types of sureties, then a few matters in which the opposing parties agree, followed by their differences.

First, civil law knows of three sureties.

(1) The first is called *Fide-jussor*, under benefit of *ordinis et excussionis*; that is, one person becomes surety for another person, the condition being that the debtor retains his debt, being first

obliged to pay as much as he is capable of. Should the debtor come up short, the surety will make satisfaction for the remainder until the full sum has been paid.

(2) The second is called *Fide-jussor*, with renunciation of the benefit of *ordinis et excussionis*; that is, the surety places himself on the same level as the debtor. This means that the creditor may file a claim and demand payment of whomever he wishes, be it the debtor or the surety; both remain under obligation. Thus, if the claim is initially filed against the surety, and he is not able to render full payment, the debtor has to make restitution for the remaining sum—or if the claim is initially filed against the debtor and he is not able to render full payment, the surety is required to make restitution for the remaining sum.

(3) The third type of surety is called an *Expromissor*, who, with the concurrence of the creditor, assumes the debt as being his own in order to personally pay it. The debtor is thus released from all debt, is no longer under obligation, and can never be held accountable again—even if the surety were to be remiss and would neither be willing nor able to pay.

These three types of sureties only play a role in settling monetary debts between individuals; therefore, these cannot be transferred and applied in all particulars to the suretyship of the Lord Jesus. For relative to that suretyship, God comes to the foreground as Judge, executing justice upon the defendant in both the sentencing and carrying out of this sentence. We are dealing here with a debtor who is worthy of death; therefore, either he or the Surety must die. Payment cannot be made jointly in this case. This Surety is both God and man and is capable of bearing and fully exhausting the punishment. Since the three types of suretyship are really not applicable here, we shall neither dwell upon these words nor shall we get involved in any disputes over those things one may wish to extract from them. If, however, we would be compelled to use one of these terms, then we maintain that Christ neither is, nor can be, a surety *Fide-jussor*, for this would be to imply imperfection in the surety or his suretyship. Such a surety would neither be of any benefit to a sinner nor could he render any comfort. Rather, we say that Christ is a Surety *Expromissor* who has taken upon Himself both guilt and punishment as being His own, and has given Himself in the place of the sinner. The Father ordained this to be so. He Himself sent the Surety, and was satisfied and well-pleased with the suretyship of His Son. Whether He would, or actually had made satisfaction, was equally certain with God. The future is with God as if it were in the past.

Secondly, the matters in which there is agreement are the following:

- (1) Old Testament believers were taken into heaven immediately upon their death, there enjoying eternal bliss.
- (2) They were not saved apart from the satisfaction of God's justice.
- (3) They were saved solely on the basis of the suffering and death of the promised Messiah, who at the appointed time would pay for their sins.
- (4) God has decreed from eternity never to punish the sins of the elect in themselves personally, but solely and in no other way than in the Surety Jesus Christ.
- (5) After the fall, God established only one covenant of grace with man. This commenced with the first promise in Paradise, and is and remains immutable until Christ's coming unto judgment. It is by way of this covenant that Old Testament believers were and New Testament believers are saved.
- (6) Thus, God has only one church upon earth, which is and remains the same in essence from Adam until the judgment.

In these points there is agreement, and one is mutually opposed to those parties who challenge any of these truths. Both sides consider all those, who in any of these points lean toward such opponents, to be opponents as well.

Thirdly, the difference of opinion consists in this: The common sentiment among the Reformed is that the suretyship of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament was identical to that of the New Testament. We believe that He took upon Himself and removed *all* the sins of *all* the elect (and thus also of all Old Testament believers) in order to pay for them by His suffering and death. Old Testament believers have thus been as free from guilt and punishment as are New Testament believers. Others maintain, however, that in the Old Testament the Surety did not take upon Himself the guilt of His people in an absolute sense. Rather, He would only have been an assisting, helping Surety who obligated Himself only upon the condition that it would please God to punish their sins in Him and not in them. They would thus remain subject to guilt and punishment while God retained the authority, right, and liberty to punish their sins in themselves until such a time when the Surety would render payment in full. In the event the Surety would fail to do so, and would either be unable or unwilling to render payment, they would then eternally be punished themselves. If one wishes to define the difference in terms of the various suretyships, then the commonly understood difference is this: Christ has been *Expromissor* in both the Old and New Testaments, whereas others

maintain that in the Old Testament Christ was only a *Fide-jussor* rather than an *Expromissor*. If anyone asks how the latter proposition harmonizes with the propositions posited in the above (to which both parties subscribe), I answer that I neither know nor am able to tie them all together. I leave that to those who propose both to be true.

*The Lord Jesus Was Surety in the Old Testament in the Absolute and Full Sense of the Word.*

That the Lord Jesus was such an absolute and vicarious Surety in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament is proven as follows:

*Proof #1:* There is one single covenant of grace which is and remains the same from Adam until Christ's coming unto judgment—a covenant in which all partakers have an equal portion and the same rights, and of which Jesus Christ is Surety (Heb 7:22). Since there is but one covenant and one Surety, and all the partakers of the covenant have equal rights and partake of this covenant in the same way, Christ must also be the same Surety at all times, and His suretyship must be of the same efficacy both before as well as after His actual satisfaction.

*Proof #2:* The apostle states in express terms that Christ was the same Surety in the Old Testament as He was in the New Testament: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). *Yesterday* pertains to the past; that is, the days of the Old Testament when those were alive of whom the apostle states in verse 7 that we should follow their faith and consider the end of their conversation. *Today* pertains to the present time, that is, the days of the New Testament. The thrust of the apostle's argument is that we should no less put our trust in Christ and have no less expectation of a good outcome than did the believers in the Old Testament, since the Lord Jesus is the same now as He was then. Thus, in respect to His Person He is the eternal and unchangeable God, and in regard to atonement and the meriting of all redemption and salvation, His Suretyship in the New Testament is of the same efficacy as previously in the Old Testament. He is presently as much our altar (vs. 10) as He was then, and He presently sanctifies His people with His own blood as He did then, they being one and the same people (vs. 12). Furthermore, He is not only given to be the atonement for the transgressions of those who were under the first Testament, but also is given as the atonement of New Testament believers. Therefore the apostle desires that we would strengthen our hearts with grace and not cleave to external

things. Since the apostle derives the foundation of comfort and confidence from Christ as He was for His people in the Old Testament, in order to strengthen us in the New Testament, it is therefore a certainty that Christ was as efficacious a Surety in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament. Since Christ is one and the same in both the Old and New Testaments, and since in the New Testament Christ is a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, then He has also been so in the Old Testament.

*Proof #3:* The nature of Christ's suretyship in the Old Testament accords with His assumption of that suretyship in the covenant of redemption or the eternal Counsel of Peace, and as He has been in the execution of that suretyship. Since in this counsel and in the execution of His suretyship He has been a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, He has necessarily also been a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word in the Old Testament.

(1) That He has given Himself as a vicarious Surety in the eternal Counsel of Peace is self-evident in light of God's wisdom, truth, and other attributes. God's objective was the salvation of the elect in the absolute sense of the word. He chose them in Christ to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph 1:5); God gave them to Christ in order that He would save them (John 17:6); and Christ has written them in His book (Rev 21:27). There is not the least contingency. How could God oblige the elect to pay for their sins when He had decreed from eternity not to punish sin in the elect, but only in the Surety? To what purpose would God, in the covenant of redemption, keep the elect subject to eternal condemnation? Did God not trust His Son? Was He not sufficiently powerful? Did the Son of God have need of guarantees, so that in the event that He would fall short, men would then assist Him and pay the remainder? Or did the Son commit Himself upon the condition of rendering payment if the Father were pleased to lay hold of Him rather than the elect—and not know this until He would enter the world in the fullness of time—so that it could have happened that He would not have had to suffer and render payment? Or else would God deal with His elect in this time state in a manner differing from His original intent, and thus think and act differently? As you see, all these absurdities show that the true, omniscient, and all-wise God could only deal with the Son in a way whereby He ordained Him to be a vicarious Surety for all the elect in the absolute sense of the word—and thus without treating the one elect person differently from the other. The Son could do no differently than to give Himself to be a vicarious Surety to the fullest degree for all the elect on equal terms.

(2) Just as the Surety has been ordained in God's eternal purpose to be a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, Christ has also executed His suretyship as such a Surety. He has rendered payment in full for the one as well as for the other. Without any reservation or condition, He has taken the place of all the elect, doing so upon equal terms. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ... the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted" (Isa 53:5-7). The prophecies were to the benefit of the people who were living during that time period, and to whom they were proclaimed. Thus, the believers of that time understood the Surety to have taken their sins upon Himself, and that He would make satisfaction for them at the appointed time. Therefore, He executed His suretyship in agreement with His eternal appointment as Surety. It is in this way alone that He could be presented as the object of faith, for the object of faith must necessarily be true. It is therefore incontrovertible that Christ has been a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament in the absolute sense of the word.

*Proof #4:* To believers in the Old Testament, Christ was held forth in no other way than as a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word—as a Surety who took their place, and who took their sins from them upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them. This is evident for the following reasons:

(1) The sacrifices were types of Jesus in His making satisfaction by way of suffering and dying. When a sinner came to the temple with a sacrificial animal, surrendering it to the priest for sacrifice, the sinner would lay his hands upon the sacrificial animal, signifying thereby that he laid his sins upon the future Messiah who was typified by that sacrificial animal. That animal would then be put to death in the place of the sinner, and consequently he would go home justified. By way of the sacrifices there was an absolute transfer of sins to the Messiah. Here faith was exercised in the Messiah—it being a certainty that He would render payment. Here justification by faith occurred—faith which must have truth as its object. Thus, in the Old Testament, Christ was a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word.

(2) Furthermore, Old Testament believers either did or did not know that they were still subject to guilt and the punishment of eternal condemnation. They also either did or did not know that God would not punish their sins in themselves, but rather that He willed and would punish them in the Surety. Had they understood that they were still subject to guilt and punishment, while not

knowing that God willed and would punish their sins, not in them, but in the Surety, they would not have been able to believe in the future Messiah, since there was not a sure promise which faith necessarily requires. They would still have been and remained subject to guilt. Thus, having had no faith, they would not have been saved. If they indeed did have faith, however, which they certainly did, there had to be an absolute promise; consequently, there had to be a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word. If, in fact, they did not know that they were and remained subject to guilt and punishment, the implication would be that God had hidden their obligation to bear the punishment themselves in His secret counsel, and not made this known to them. Had they actually known, however, that God willed and would punish their sins in the Surety, they could only have considered Christ as being a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word, and thus believing in Him, they could be at peace and consider themselves as being free from guilt and punishment. Otherwise the concern would remain that the Surety would come short, or that His payment would be insufficient and that they, being the primary debtors, would therefore have to render either a full or partial payment. What a dreadful thing it is, however, to think of God and of the almighty and faithful Jesus in such terms! He would not even have been a perfect Surety. If, however, He became Surety with the Father's approbation, then, upon the debt having been transferred, the justified debtor could never be held accountable for his debt again.

(3) If one maintains that these believers indeed knew that Christ alone, and not they themselves, would render payment, but that God, nevertheless, made known to them that He reserved the right and the authority to punish sin in them rather than in the Surety—then I answer that it is contradictory to know on the one hand that Christ would most certainly render payment, and to know on the other hand that God is at liberty not to require payment from the Surety, but rather to punish them. God cannot command faith in contradictory matters. It thus remains a certain fact that Christ has been a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament.

*Proof #5:* Old Testament believers were saved and translated into heaven immediately upon their death. This is not a point of contention. However, either they were in heaven while yet subject to guilt and punishment until Christ died; or they were fully justified from all guilt and punishment, and declared to be heirs of the eternal salvation they already possessed. If they were still subject to guilt in heaven, they would also have to fear that the

moment would arrive when subjection to punishment would yet be required, and that it would be possible for them to be expelled from heaven and be cast into hell. These are contradictory matters indeed: to be saved in heaven while yet being subject to guilt and punishment, fearing the possibility of expulsion. If they were fully justified, this occurred either without total satisfaction of God's justice—which is impossible—or by virtue of the perfect suretyship of the Messiah who, though He had not yet rendered payment, had in the absolute sense of the word removed their sins from them and taken them upon Himself in order to render payment for them at the appointed time. If the latter is true by virtue of the satisfaction of Christ, then Christ, in the absolute sense of the word, was in the Old Testament a vicarious Surety to believers after their death. Thus, relative to this suretyship, future payment and actual payment are of equal efficacy. If Christ is the vicarious Surety of believers subsequent to their death, He is also such prior to their death. They are the very same elect; God does not change toward them, and Christ did not change relative to His suretyship each time a believer died. Thus, in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus was a vicarious Surety in the absolute sense of the word.

*Proof #6:* Old Testament believers had the benefits of reconciliation with God, the adoption of children, true saving faith, full justification, peace with God, etc. We shall prove this to be true in what follows. They could not be partakers of those benefits except by way of a perfect, vicarious Surety. The Lord Jesus was therefore such a Surety in the Old Testament.

### *Objections Answered*

*Objection #1:* If the Surety were to be remiss, would believers in the Old Testament have been saved? The justice of God would not permit this, and therefore the fathers of the Old Testament had to remain subject to guilt until the Surety had in actuality made satisfaction.

*Answer (1)* Then those believers who had the promise prior to Sinai would be in one and the same state as those who lived subsequent to Sinai. However, the opposing party exalts the state of the former far above the state of the latter.

(2) Would the souls of the just made perfect then be expelled from heaven if the Surety would prove to be remiss?

(3) It is a dreadful thing to believe, let alone to say, "if the Surety would prove to be remiss." God cannot lie, the counsel of the Lord will stand, and the Lord Jesus is both obedient and faithful. Thus, what room is there for such a foolish argument?

*Objection #2:* If Christ were to have taken the guilt of the elect upon

Himself in the absolute sense of the word, He would then have to render payment for His own guilt, and believers would then be redeemed by having their guilt assumed, rather than by satisfaction.

*Answer* (1) One could maintain the same thing by positing Christ to be only a promising Surety—one whose suretyship is contingent upon conditions.

(2) Christ has rendered payment for the sins of the elect, whose guilt He took upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them in their stead.

(3) The same would be true in the New Testament.

*Objection #3:* “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17). This proves that one had to render payment himself if the Surety proved to be remiss. Thus, Christ was not a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament; instead, believers remained subject to guilt until the Surety had rendered payment.

*Answer* (1) In using the word “you” and “ye,” the apostle is speaking of the New Testament period, stating the condition believers would be in had Christ not risen. Would one then conclude thereby that Christ is but a *Fide-jussor* in the New Testament—that is, a supporting and assisting Surety who will step in when man cannot render payment? Or are we to conclude that if God were to require restitution from either or both of the parties, that New Testament believers would yet be subject to guilt and punishment?

(2) The apostle declares it to be an impossibility that Christ, being God and man, would not have arisen from the dead. He establishes with certainty that our faith is not in vain and that we are not in our sins.

(3) He proves the resurrection of the dead, which some denied, by the resurrection of Christ, proving that Christ had arisen by stating the absurdities which would follow had Christ not risen. It is therefore not the apostle’s objective to teach what the consequences are of Christ not having risen, but rather what absurdities and impossibilities follow from such a position.

(4) The subject under consideration is neither the state of Old Testament believers nor the notion that they, for fear that Christ would be remiss, would have remained subject to guilt and punishment until Christ had rendered payment. *Conditio impossibilis nihil ponit in esse:* An impossible condition does not establish anything. It was impossible that Christ would not perfectly execute everything required by His suretyship. It is therefore foolishness to imagine certain matters which would follow if there were no satisfaction.

*Objection #4:* Since payment had not been rendered for guilt, it remained until full payment had been made.

*Answer:* What sort of conclusion is this? Is Christ therefore not a vicarious Surety? One denies this, insisting that Christ is a vicarious Surety. This means therefore that Christ was a vicarious Surety who at the proper time would make satisfaction. Believers did not remain subject to guilt; the Surety had taken it upon Himself. It had not been paid as yet, but the infallible One would make satisfaction for it.

*Objection #5:* For Old Testament believers, the handwriting against them had to be rescinded daily (Col 2:14). Hereby they obligated themselves to render payment; thus Christ was not a vicarious Surety.

*Answer:* It is not true that believers obligated themselves daily to render payment for their sins. The word “handwriting” does not imply this. Rather, it signifies that the sacrifices could not remove their sins, but that their sins would most certainly be paid for by the Surety who had taken their guilt upon Himself. Of this the sacrifices assured them. This handwriting was in some way not entirely against them, as the promised Messiah neither had come as yet nor had made satisfaction for everything. This did not weigh them down, however, nor result in less assurance concerning the payment by the Surety.

All errors in this matter arise from comparing God and His doings with man and his doings—which conflicts with Isa 55:8—and from comparing the Surety Jesus Christ relative to death and the righteous judgment of God, as Judge, with the functioning of human sureties relative to monetary debts. We have refuted this, and have confirmed that Jesus Christ as Surety, as to method and efficacy, is the same in both the Old and New Testament; that is, in having taken both the guilt and punishment from the elect upon Himself. It thus follows that in regard to the essence of the matter, Old Testament believers have been in the same state of reconciliation, sonship, peace, and friendship with God as have New Testament believers. We shall discuss this subject in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FIVE

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The State of Old Testament Believers

Between Old and New Testament believers there are significant differences in regard to the measure of light, faith, comfort, and various other matters—a few eminent saints being the exception. However, as far as the essence of the matter is concerned, there are no differences. They have the same Spirit, the same faith, the same justification and forgiveness of sins, the same peace of conscience, and the same sonship. There are some, however, who maintain that the difference does not pertain to the measure of application, but rather to the essence of this application and to their state as such. Several questions need to be addressed concerning this issue.

*Old Testament Believers Enjoyed the Full Forgiveness of Sins*

*Question:* Were Old Testament believers, prior to Christ's coming, reconciled with God, fully justified by a true, saving faith, and did they have the full forgiveness of sins; or were they in an unreconciled state, not justified by faith, and without the full forgiveness of sins?

*Answer:* These matters are interrelated and pertain to the true essence of the state of believers. The confirmation of the one matter will at once confirm the other. We have therefore joined them together and answer the latter part of the proposed question negatively, and the first part affirmatively. There are others, however, who have denied the first and maintained the second. Such propositions appear at first glance to be entirely Socinian, and those who adhere to such propositions will have a considerable task in refuting the Socinian. Nevertheless, we do not accuse them of Socinianism. We declare the wise and stable among them, based upon their explanations and declarations, to be free of Socinianism.

We deal with them as brothers, albeit as weak brothers who in some respects are in error. The radicals who know not what they are saying and affirming, we shall let fend for themselves; they are not esteemed by either party.

The one party maintains that in the Old Testament Christ as Surety was not a vicarious *Expromissor*, but rather a promising, supporting, and assisting *Fide-jussor*. They maintain that God made known to the Old Testament saints that one day there would come such a Surety, who at the appointed time would make satisfaction for their sins, and that they had to view the sacrifices as types—and thus had to believe in Him in that manner. However, as long as the Surety had not rendered payment, they, as the primary debtors, would remain subject to guilt. Thus, they were also subject to the curse and wrath, since God reserved the right and authority to pour this wrath out upon them, even though He neither wanted to, nor actually did so.

They maintain that God tolerated them until the Surety had paid; that is, even though He did not forgive their sins, He bypassed them. He closed His eyes to their sins and overlooked them as if He did not see them, for He Himself knew that one day the Surety would render satisfaction. This passing by they express with the word *παρεσιω* (*paresis*), insisting that this word is the antonym of the word *αφεσιω* (*aphesis*). They relate the first word to the Old Testament and the latter to the New Testament. During the time of my youth and academic studies, when these sentiments initially surfaced and began to get a foothold, there were intense arguments about the words *aphesis* and *paresis*, but later on those with clearer understanding came to realize that on the basis of these words a distinction cannot be maintained between forgiveness in the Old and New Testaments. Thus, they discontinued the debate about these words, but nevertheless preserved a distinction within the matter itself, and made use of these words only to express their understanding of the issue.

We believe that we have hereby clearly expressed the very nature of the difference. We shall now proceed to prove our viewpoint, and thereafter consider the thrust of the arguments advanced for the contrary views.

*Proof #1:* It is evident from the suretyship of the Lord Jesus that Old Testament believers have been reconciled with God, have been fully justified by a saving faith, and have had the full forgiveness of sins. If in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus has been a vicarious Surety in the absolute and complete sense of the word, then those believers have been in the state as just described. And

whereas Jesus has been such a Surety in the Old Testament, believers were indeed in that state. The first premise is a certainty, and we believe that none will deny or argue the premise. If all sins have been fully and forever removed from believers and have been imputed to the Surety, and if these sins have been taken upon Himself upon the command and with the consent of God as the Judge of heaven and earth, they are then not liable for anything, and all the merits of the Surety are their portion. In Him they are righteous before God, reconciled, and have complete forgiveness. The second premise is equally certain, as has been shown and confirmed in the previous chapter. The conclusion is thus a certainty as well.

*Proof #2:* We derive this proof from clear texts of Scripture which not only state expressly that Old Testament believers have been reconciled and justified, and have had the forgiveness of sins, but which express these matters in those very terms—terms which are identical to those whereby reconciliation, justification, and the forgiveness of sins of believers are expressed in the New Testament. There being too many, we shall only present a few.

(1) ρπκ (*Kipper*)

“... when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an *atonement* for your souls” (Exod 30:15); “... to make an *atonement* for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an *atonement* for the soul” (Lev 17:11); “The good Lord *pardon* every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers” (2 Chron 30:18-19); “Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt *purge* them away” (Ps 65:3). The New Testament uses this same word to express reconciliation on the basis of the actual payment of the Surety. “Seventy weeks are determined ... to make reconciliation for iniquity” (Dan 9:24).

(2) ξλσ (*salach*)

“... pardon our iniquity and our sin” (Exod 34:9); “And the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them” (Lev 4:20); “For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive” (Ps 86:5); “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities” (Ps 103:3). David speaks of himself, praises God for the benefits bestowed upon him, and rejoices in the enjoyment of them. Forgiveness in the New Testament is, however, expressed with the same word: “I will *forgive* their iniquity” (Jer 31:34). Everyone concurs that this prophecy pertains to the New Testament era.

(3) )#v (*nasa*)

“... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exod 34:7); “Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according

unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num 14:19); “Thou wast a God that forgavest them” (Ps 99:8). This same word is found in Ps 32:1-2: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” The one party insists adamantly that this is a prophecy relating to the New Testament. Let us assume that this is so. We then conclude on the basis of their own testimony that *forgiveness* expressed by the word *nasa* is the forgiveness bestowed upon Old Testament believers. However, such forgiveness as expressed by the word *nasa* is the forgiveness granted to Old Testament believers. This is evident from the texts quoted above, as well as many others. Thus, Old Testament believers had the same complete forgiveness as did New Testament believers. We do deny, however, that this text only pertains to the days of the New Testament. David speaks of himself and applies this forgiveness to himself to his own comfort. “I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Ps 32:5). He presents this benefit bestowed upon him as an encouragement for everyone to seek the Lord when He is to be found (vs. 6).

The apostle quotes this text in Rom 4:6-8—however, not as a prophecy, but as proof for his proposition that man is freely justified, without the works of the law. It is noteworthy that the apostle translates the word *nasa* with *aphienai*. Thus, Old Testament believers had *aphesin*; he shows that such forgiveness already occurred in the Old Testament at the time of Abraham, prior to circumcision. In Rom 4:9 he asks: “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?” He answers in Rom 4:10 that Abraham was a partaker of this blessedness, consisting in the forgiveness of sins, when he was still uncircumcised: “How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.”

In the New Testament it is stated expressly that in the Old Testament, and antecedent to Christ’s incarnation, believers had the satisfaction and forgiveness expressed by the word  $\alpha\!\phi\epsilon\sigma\iota\omega$  (*aphesis*): “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22). John the Baptist preached “the baptism of repentance unto the *forgiveness* (*aphesin*) of sins” (Mark 1:4). The Lord Jesus taught His disciples already prior to His death and resurrection to pray: “*Forgive* ( $\alpha\!\phi\epsilon\omega$ , *aphes*) us our debts” (Matt 6:12). He said to the palsied man: “ $\alpha\!\phi\iota\epsilon\nu\tau\alpha\iota$ , thy sins are *forgiven* thee” (Matt 9:2). All these texts prove that Old Testament

believers have had the forgiveness of sins—a forgiveness as New Testament believers have, as expressed by the word *aphesis*.

*Proof #3:* We derive this proof from justification by faith, of which Scripture speaks expressly in respect to the Old Testament believers. That they did have true saving faith is evident from Rom 4:3: “Abraham believed God.” Yes, he is even called the father of New Testament believers: “... that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Rom 4:11). David believed: “I believed” (Ps 116:10); “I have believed Thy commandments” (Ps 119:66). Daniel believed: “... because he believed in his God” (Dan 6:23). In Heb 11 Paul gives a long list of Old Testament believers from Abel onward. To believe is to accept, surrender to, lean upon, rely upon, and entrust one’s self to Jesus in order to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. By this faith, Old Testament believers have been justified. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:2-3; cf. James 2:23). Justification is a work of God as righteous Judge. If God is to justify anyone and pronounce the sentence of acquittal, there must be a perfect righteousness—a righteousness no one had of himself in the Old Testament, even as none have it in the New Testament. Therefore, if anyone is to be justified, the righteousness of the Surety must be applied to him—from God’s side this happens on the basis of suretyship by way of imputation, and from man’s side by way of the acceptance by faith upon the basis of the divine offer. There is no room here for a turning away, overlooking, or passing by of something as unnoticed. God’s judgment is righteous and in truth; one is either guilty or righteous. If God did indeed justify Old Testament believers—which He most certainly did, as we have shown from the justification of Abraham—then the full righteousness of the Surety has been applied to them, and they have thus been fully acquitted from their sins and have been declared the heirs of salvation.

*Proof #4:* This proof we derive from the covenant of grace. Those who are in actuality in the covenant of grace are in actuality reconciled with God and have their sins forgiven. Since, however Old Testament believers have truly been partakers of the covenant of grace, they have in actuality been reconciled with God and have had forgiveness of sin. The first premise is self-evident, for the covenant of grace encompasses the deliverance from all evil, participation in all good, and particularly also the forgiveness of sins; that is, the removal of all guilt and punishment. “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those

days, saith the Lord ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:33-34); “And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity ... and I will pardon all their iniquities” (Jer 33:8).

*Evasive Argument:* These texts speak of the days of the New Testament, so that one cannot draw a conclusion about forgiveness in the days of the Old Testament.

*Answer:* These promises pertain to the benefits of the covenant of grace, and not to the manner of its administration. The New Testament was neither before nor during the days of the Old Testament. Rather, it came thereafter and in its place. If, however, these promises were only in force during the days of the New Testament—and thus by virtue of the New Testament rather than by virtue of the covenant of grace, which, as all concur, has remained unaltered from Adam and will be so until the Day of Judgment—then Old Testament believers would not have been privy to these benefits, among which is the forgiveness of sins. The following promise would also not have pertained to Old Testament believers: “I ... will be their God, and they shall be My people”—a promise found in both Jer 31:33 and Jer 32:38, and placed on the same level as the forgiveness of sins. But was God not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Was not this the express promise of the covenant of grace made with Abraham and his seed in Gen 17:8? However, since God was the God of Old Testament believers by reason of the immutable covenant of grace and not by virtue of the New Testament (which did not exist during the Old Testament), Old Testament believers also had the forgiveness of sins—not by virtue of a new administration, but by virtue of the covenant of grace itself. The two promises mentioned in this text, “I ... will be their God,” and “I will forgive their iniquity” Jer 31:33-34, are benefits of one and the same covenant, called a new covenant due to its new administration. I ask, “Is not the Old Testament the covenant of grace?” If not, then God is not the God of believers. Then believers do not have the forgiveness of sins by reason of the covenant of grace, but by reason of another covenant which did not commence until the days of the Lord Jesus, and did not exist previous thereto. Then Old Testament believers did not have God as their God, since there was no covenant. If the Old Testament is the covenant of grace, then Old Testament believers who truly were in the covenant of grace have been partakers of all the benefits of this covenant—and thus also of these promises: *I shall be their God; and I shall forgive their unrighteousness, and remember their sins no more.* The covenant is

called new here by reason of its new administration and not relative to its essence.

*Proof #5:* We derive this proof from the state of Old Testament believers prior to, and after their death. Prior to their death they were God's regenerated children and God was their reconciled Father. They did indeed have assurance of their blessed state, did indeed have peace with God in their conscience concerning their justification, and did indeed rejoice in God. We shall demonstrate this in our response to the questions which follow. After their death they were taken into heaven—into eternal bliss and glory. Concerning these facts both parties concur. If, therefore, Old Testament believers enjoyed salvation in the fullest sense of the word after their death, then they were completely justified, had the complete forgiveness of sins, and were completely sanctified. The souls of the dead believers are "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb 12:23). No one can enter heaven except it be upon the foundation of being fully justified before God, the righteous Judge. To be in heaven enjoying perfect communion, perfect joy in God, and perfect felicity, while yet being in an unreconciled state, subject to guilt and punishment, and unjustified, are contradictory matters which cannot coexist. Likewise, not having a perfect holiness and to be reconciled are mutually exclusive matters. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated. Those whom He has justified, He has also glorified (Rom 8:30). Also the reverse is true: Those whom He has glorified were also predestinated, called, and justified. From all this it is certain and sure that Old Testament believers were not in a state wherein they were unreconciled, not justified, and laden with guilt and punishment. Instead, they were fully reconciled with God, were fully justified by God, and had the complete forgiveness of sins. In justification there are no degrees. Either one is fully and completely justified, or he is not justified at all.

We shall now consider and respond to the objections of those who are of a different persuasion.

#### *Ten Objections Refuted*

*Objection #1:* "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom 3:25). The Old Testament is here called the time of God's forbearance. Wherever forbearance is exercised, there is neither reconciliation nor forgiveness. Both curse and wrath are and remain in effect. Sins are only overlooked and bypassed. This is the reason

why the word *paresis* is used, which stands in opposition to *aphesis*. The latter constitutes forgiveness in the true sense of the word, and only takes place in the New Testament.

*Answer #1:* We admit that the word “forbearance” signifies a time frame: the time of the Old Testament. This is all the more evident since the apostle, speaking of the same matter, calls this time the time of the Old Testament. “... for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament” (Heb 9:15). We admit that the word *paresis* is found here, and is translated as “to forgive.” We deny, however, that the conclusion drawn from this is valid.

(1) “To forbear” neither signifies to leave unreconciled and unforgiven, nor does it mean to overlook curse and wrath. Rather, “to forbear” is to refrain from punishing sin, and to postpone judgment. One can observe this in Rom 2:4, “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance?” and also in Rom 9:22, “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” God neither overlooks the sins of the unconverted nor does He shut His eyes and pass them by. He only postpones His punishment and by His forbearance gives them space to repent. God also tolerated sin in the Old Testament in this manner. He postponed His judgments upon the unconverted. He did indeed punish Israel, but He did not eliminate this ungodly nation. Rather He bore with them until after Christ’s ascension. Then He punished them with total destruction. God did also bear with the sins of believers; that is, He did not punish them immediately. He postponed the punishment, but not to leave their sins unpunished. God’s justice would not permit this. If he did, we would have no need for Christ. Rather, He would punish them at the appointed time—not in themselves, for then they would have been eternally lost. Instead, their sins would be punished in the Surety Jesus Christ *at the appointed time*, who as *Expromissor*, as vicarious Surety, had removed the sins of the elect by taking them upon Himself. The forbearance of which the apostle speaks here has reference to the Jewish nation which was in a covenant relationship with God, and was the church of God. She was ungodly and tempted God; however, God did not want to eliminate her. He bore with her until the appointed time of her total destruction. This is what is meant by the time of forbearance or longsuffering of God. Thus, it is incorrect and contrary to the text to maintain that forbearance applies to a forgiveness of sorts, a closing of the eyes, an overlooking, or a bypassing of the sins of God’s elect.

(2) The word “forbearance” can neither be connected with

“forgiveness of sins,” nor with “remission of sins that are past.” Rather, it is connected with “to declare His righteousness.” God has declared His righteousness during the time of His forbearance in the Old Testament by forgiving sins for the sake of the merits of Christ, received by faith. This is evident from the apostle’s objective in this chapter, which is to show that man is not justified by works, but upon the basis of the atonement—through the merits of Christ, embraced by faith. (cf. vss. 20-22,28). He shows that justification without works, through the merits of Christ, and received by faith, occurred in both the Old and New Testaments. As far as justification is concerned, there was no difference. In the Old Testament the Jews were equally a partaker of justification as were the Gentiles in the New Testament. Yes, the apostle establishes justification in the Old Testament as being certain, irrefutable, and acknowledged by all. His primary argument is that justification by faith, without works, occurred both in the New Testament among the Gentiles, as it did in the Old Testament among the Jews. “Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith” (Rom 3:29-30). The apostle declares that Christ is set forth in both the Old and New Testaments to that end as a propitiation (ἰλαστήριον, *hilasterion*)—the name of the mercy seat of the ark, which is an extraordinary type of the Lord Christ. Furthermore, he shows that in both Testaments the righteousness of God shone forth in the forgiveness of sins by reason of the atonement set forth and embraced by faith. God’s righteousness manifested itself in the giving of the Surety, in punishing sin in the Surety, in the forgiveness of sins, and in the satisfaction made by the Surety. In verse 25 the apostle declares that this occurred in the past—in the Old Testament, the time of forbearance. In verse 26 he declares that this does occur in the New Testament—in the present time. This proves that this text does not support the sentiments of some, but rather refutes them forcefully.

*Answer #2:* The proof derived from the word *pareisis*, that is, forgiveness, no longer is valid.

(1) This word stands here entirely by itself; it is found nowhere else in the Bible. The word *aphesis* is found neither in this verse, this chapter, nor in the entire letter to the Romans. Only in Rom 4:7 the verb ἀφεθῆσαν (*aphethesan*) is found. Thus, there is not the least evidence that the word “to forgive,” here only expressed as *pareisis*, is being contrasted by the apostle with forgiveness

expressed by *aphesis*, the former only occurring in the Old Testament and the latter in the New Testament.

(2) Furthermore, *paresis* does not mean “to pass by,” or “to close the eyes,” or “to overlook.” Rather, it means “to loosen,” or “to release.” If one were to apply the word *paresis* to the time of the Old Testament, it would not support the above sentiment in the least. It would signify that God in forgiving sin in the Old Testament dispensation, loosed and released people from sin—just as forgiveness is expressed by a variety of expressions, such as: to remove, to blot out, not to remember, to cast into the depth of the sea, not to impute, to forgive, to atone, etc. All these expressions signify a complete, real, and actual acquittal from guilt and punishment.

(3) The words *aphesis* and *paresis* are never contrasted with each other. Rather, they are used indiscriminately in the Bible (the word *paresis* being found but once and without comparison or contrast), as well as by the Greek translators of the Old Testament and the Greek writers.

(4) In Scripture the forgiveness of sins by way of *aphesis* is generally attributed to Old Testament believers. This we have proven above.

(5) The apostle Paul, speaking of forgiveness in the Old Testament in the identical circumstances as in the text posited here, expresses forgiveness in Heb 9:22 (combined with verse 15) with *aphesis*—*just as he does here with paresis*.

(6) The text itself shows that the word *paresis* is expressive of a forgiveness which is both absolute and complete. The apostle speaks of such a forgiveness by which the righteousness of God is manifested. However, the shutting of the eyes to sin, the overlooking of, and the blind passing by of sin does not manifest the righteousness of God in the least—neither in the punishment of sin in the Surety, nor by the forgiveness of sin due to the satisfaction of the Surety. This righteousness is only manifested in complete forgiveness.

*Objection #2:* “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom 5:13). Here the apostle establishes two facts: 1) Sin was in the world prior to Christ’s coming, and beginning at Adam, remained upon believers until the actual satisfaction of Christ occurred; 2) the sin of the golden calf and other sins were not imputed as a result of the giving of the ceremonial law; that is, these sins were silently overlooked, payment was not required on account of them, and believers were not blamed for them. However, the sins committed after that time were imputed to believers; that is, they were held accountable for them, and were under and remained under obligation to pay for

those sins. Thus, they neither had atonement nor forgiveness, but remained subject to guilt, wrath, and curse.

*Answer* (1) The apostle is not speaking here of either Old or New Testament believers, nor of those who lived either prior to or after Moses. Rather, he is speaking of all men as they have sinned in Adam and must die due to sin. This he had declared in the previous verse; consequently, this text does not apply at all to the controversy pertaining to the state of believers.

(2) To impute is to charge a person with, to hold him guilty, and to treat him as such. “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account ... I will repay it” Philemon 18-19. *Not* to impute is the opposite; that is, a person is not charged with sins, and is thus considered free of guilt and sin. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity” (Ps 32:1-2). The one party insists that this text is prophetic, declaring what the state of New Testament believers would be. They refute themselves, however, by insisting that Rom 5:13 is applicable to the state of believers prior to Moses. These believers would then have had forgiveness and the non-imputation of sins such as New Testament believers have (since non-imputation in the New Testament means full acquittal and complete forgiveness), even though Christ had not made satisfaction as yet.

(3) The apostle speaks neither of the ceremonial law, or of the sin of the golden calf, nor does he imply a change from better to worse in the believer’s state after that time. It is therefore entirely erroneous to infer such a change from this text.

(4) In this chapter the apostle contrasts Adam and Christ—Adam as the cause of sin, and Christ as the cause of justification. He ascertains that sin has come upon all men through the fall of Adam (vs. 12). In verses 13-14 he deduces this from the fact that death has reigned since Adam. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Where there is death, there is sin.

*Evasive Argument:* Where there is no law, there is no transgression. There was, however, no law prior to Moses, for the law was given by him.

*Answer:* The apostle states that there was indeed a law, for there was judgment upon sin, and thus there was sin. When there is sin, there is also a law. Prior to Moses, the moral law was impressed upon man’s nature. Furthermore, there were ceremonial laws governing the making of altars, sacrifices, and the objects to be sacrificed. Upon the giving of the law at Sinai, sin has been more

clearly defined; but sin, the punishment of sin, and death had previously existed.

(5) Even if one insisted that this text pertains to believers—this being the point of contention—it obviously would contradict the text which speaks of all men and even of small children who have no actual sins as yet. Thus, no other conclusion could be drawn than that believers did sin prior to the giving of the law at Sinai; but their sins were not imputed to them because the Surety had already taken all their sins from them upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them.

*Objection #3:* “And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). Here it is declared that no one in the Old Testament could be justified, sin not having been punished and atoned for. Rather, it states that justification takes place subsequent to Christ’s satisfaction.

*Answer:* Such a conclusion is in direct conflict with the text. The apostle is not speaking of either a time prior to or after Christ, nor is he speaking of either the Old or New Testament. Rather, he is speaking of the cause of justification, which could not be accomplished by either the law of Moses, the moral law, or the ceremonial law. It could not be the moral law, for having been transgressed, it is incapable of rendering man righteous. It could not be the ceremonial law divorced from the antitype; for then the ceremonial acts would be divorced from the exercise of faith in the antitype. These laws neither did nor were capable of rendering a ransom unto God. The only thing he posits here is that Christ is the sole cause of justification to all who believe in Him—be it in the Old Testament where believers believed in Christ by means of the types, or in the New Testament.

*Objection #4:* “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross” (Col 2:14). The ceremonies were a code of obligation, requiring the payment for incurred guilt. By participating in the ceremonies, the Israelites would daily concur in this. God could therefore require from them the punishment of sin—which indeed He did by rebuking them for their sins and keeping them subject to guilt, curse, and wrath. It is thus very evident that Old Testament believers did not have the forgiveness of sins.

*Answer* (1) Everyone will admit that this text uses figurative speech. It is not a document which is under discussion, but rather animals which were killed and sacrificed. The ceremonial law, that is, the ceremonial procedures themselves are referred to as “handwriting,”

rather than anything believers presented to God. They did not present these ceremonies as they were not ceremonies instituted by them. Instead, it was God who had given them these laws and institutions. In sacrificing, believers did not obligate themselves to anything. They did not obligate themselves to render payment; nothing was further from the truth. The sacrifices pointed them to the fact that a Surety would come at His appointed time—a Surety who had obligated Himself to render payment. The sacrifices sealed the forgiveness of sins to the believers through the satisfaction of the Surety. In that respect the handwriting was as a receipt, but not an obligation for which they were responsible. The nature of these divine institutions (the ceremonial laws) was such that in some measure they were a handwriting, declaring that *payment would have to be rendered*, and the repetition of those sacrifices indicated that *the payment for that guilt had not been rendered as yet*. Upon having rendered payment, the Surety Jesus Christ did remove the handwriting (the ceremonial institutions), having nailed them to the cross. He thereby terminated them as having been completed and having served their purpose. In that sense the ceremonies were as a handwriting, and it is evident from what is stated in the text that believers did not present a signed statement obligating themselves to the payment of their sins.

(2) When the apostle states that the handwriting *was against us*, he indicates thereby that it was not against Old Testament believers, but against the Gentiles. He states: “which was contrary to us”—ὁ(πεναντι/ον (*hypenantion*); that is, there is something obscure there, something which is hidden and which is contrary. It means that as long as the ceremonies were in force, the Gentiles were deprived of the true religion. Thus, the ceremonial worship distinguished and separated the church from the Gentiles. The congregation of Colosse consisted primarily of Gentiles: “And you, that were sometime alienated ...” (Col 1:21). These converted Jews wanted to lead the believing Gentiles to the Jewish ceremonies. The apostle opposes this, showing in this text that the ceremonies were no longer of any benefit, having served their purpose by reason of the coming of Christ, who was the embodiment of the shadows.

(3) If one wishes this handwriting to be applicable to the Jewish church, then there was indeed also something in the shadows which was contrary to them. Aside from the fact that the ceremonies led them to Christ and sealed to them the forgiveness of sins, they would confess that the Surety had not yet come. They had not yet received the fulfillment of the promise of Christ coming into

the flesh, for which they so yearned. Thus, they were deprived of the glorious state of the church, not then being permitted to behold that state. That is the meaning of this text.

*Objection #5:* “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). Thus, when there are offerings, there is no forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament there were offerings, and thus there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament.

*Answer* (1) If this conclusion were valid, there would be neither *aphesis* nor *paresis* in the Old Testament. There would have been no forgiveness whatsoever, nor any overlooking of sin. The sacrifices of that time were neither able to remove sins nor to cause them to be overlooked. God’s justice would neither permit sin to go unpunished nor grant the sinner admittance into heaven, since the sacrifice of Christ had not been accomplished in actuality. Besides, the Scriptures know of no distinction between *aphesis* and *paresis*; it makes no difference whether the one or the other word is used. By reason of such a conclusion, one would have to join the Socinians.

(2) This text states a general truth, which is dictated by logic, and neither is nor can be denied by anyone. When there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer a need for a satisfying sacrifice. What purpose would it serve? That which it would accomplish has already been accomplished. It is very poor reasoning to conclude from this text that there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament because there were offerings. Indeed, these sacrifices did not render satisfaction, but only typified the one perfect sacrifice of Christ—that sacrifice which is of one and the same efficacy relative to the forgiveness of sins prior as well as subsequent to His actual sacrifice. He is the same yesterday and today.

(3) The apostle is not dealing here with the manner of forgiveness in either the Old or New Testament. Rather, he is speaking of the cause of forgiveness; that is, which sacrifice was efficacious to that end: either the ceremonial sacrifice or the sacrifice of Christ. The apostle contrasts these two, showing that the ceremonial law could never remove sin, but that Christ with one sacrifice has perfected forever them that are sanctified. He proved the ineffectiveness of the first by its continual repetition. That which needs to be repeated time and again is not a complete work. That which needs to be repeatedly sacrificed has neither made satisfaction for nor removed sin. Since Christ’s sacrifice has made full satisfaction, however, it can no longer be repeated, for where there is forgiveness, there is no longer a purpose for a sacrifice. Since full satisfaction has been made through the sacrifice of Christ, the ceremonial sacrifices of the Old Testament no longer need occur; they have served their purpose.

(4) This text, therefore, neither speaks of the sacrifices of the Old Testament nor of the sacrifice of Christ. Rather, it declares the general truth that upon satisfaction for and removal of sin, a sacrifice no longer serves a purpose. There can no longer be any room for the performance of a sacrifice, for what the repeated sacrifices sought to accomplish has been accomplished. By this argument the apostle shows that the sacrifice of Christ, which had fully removed sin, could not be repeated, and that the typifying sacrifices of the Old Testament had served their purpose.

*Objection #6:* “And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Here the apostle shows that those sins which had been committed during the Old Testament were first atoned for by the death of Christ; that is, at the time when Christ died. If they were then first atoned for, they were not previously atoned for, but constituted an outstanding debt charged to the account of believers who did not have the forgiveness of sins; their sins were only bypassed.

*Answer (1)* We state once more that Scripture does not differentiate between *paresis* and *aphesis*, or between forgiving and overlooking something. God’s righteousness does not permit the one any more than the other. If He can bypass sin by overlooking it, He can also forgive sin—yes, to forgive and to bypass are one and the same thing. If the sins of the Old Testament believers had not been atoned for because the actual satisfaction had not yet been made, then Old Testament believers would have had no forgiveness whatsoever. No matter how one wishes to express this, they would then have lived and died in an entirely unreconciled state, and consequently would have gone lost. Since they were saved, however, they were therefore also reconciled, and thus their sins had been forgiven them.

(2) We must make a distinction between the act by which the atonement was merited and the efficacy of this act. The act by which the atonement was merited occurred only once; it was accomplished at the time of Christ’s suffering. In the Old Testament the act of atonement had not been performed as yet. Christ had not yet come into the flesh, and had neither suffered nor died. This is a known fact, admitted by everyone. However, the efficacy of the act of atonement does not only pertain to the New Testament and to sins which had not occurred but would be committed. Rather, it also pertains retroactively to the sins of Old Testament believers since the time of Adam. One will have to admit that the

bearing with and the bypassing of sin in the Old Testament occurred by virtue of the efficacy of this act, and that believers by reason of this atoning act have been saved. This means that Christ's atoning act was already efficacious several thousand years prior to its actual occurrence. If it was efficacious unto the overlooking of sin and unto salvation, it was efficacious unto atonement and forgiveness.

(3) The text itself shows that Old Testament believers did have the atonement and forgiveness. It states very clearly that the death of Christ was for the redemption of the transgression of those who were under the first testament. Believers were therefore partakers of this redemption in the Old Testament. Or is it true that Old Testament believers first received redemption at the time of the death of Christ? Did those who were called not receive the promise of eternal inheritance until Christ's death; and did they only then enter heaven? Were they, prior to Christ's death, imprisoned in *limbus patrum*, a fabrication of popery? Did Christ only remove them from there after His death? Indeed not! They have received the promise of eternal inheritance already after their death. They have entered heaven—as the opposing party admits and acknowledges—by reason of the redemption of their transgressions through the death of the Mediator, who is here declared to be the cause of their receiving their inheritance. To have been in heaven and enjoyed a complete salvation while yet being unreconciled; to have enjoyed perfect communion with God for several thousand years, and not to have received redemption until thereafter—consequently to have obtained the forgiveness of sins while in heaven—is altogether contradictory.

(4) That Christ is called the Mediator of the New Testament is of no support to the opposing party, for they themselves admit that Christ was also Surety and Mediator during the Old Testament era. The covenant of grace is one and the same covenant since Adam and will continue unchanged until Christ returns unto judgment. This testament is called “new” relative to its administration. Upon the coming of the Mediator, who is the embodiment of the shadows, the entire ceremonial worship ceases, and the more excellent administration of this Mediator begins—and thus He is called the Mediator of the New Testament.

*Objection #7:* “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have

had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year” (Heb 10:1-3). Since in the Old Testament there was made an annual remembrance of sins, and believers were conscious of their sins, there was no forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament.

*Answer* (1) We fully concur that the ceremonial sacrifices did not remove sin, nor were they capable of doing so. We agree that the ceremonial law did not have the substance itself, but only the shadows, and the repetition of the sacrifices was proof that these were not capable of removing sin and purifying the conscience.

(2) When the apostle speaks of having conscience of sin, he is thereby not denying that believers had peace of conscience by reason of the forgiveness of sins. Rather, he states that this peace could not be obtained by means of the sacrifices, for he says that the law could never make “the comers thereunto perfect.” The sacrifices could therefore not remove the consciousness of sin. He speaks here of the sacrifices and their efficacy, contrasting them with the sacrifice of Christ. He denies that the sacrifices have any efficacy to remove sin, to cleanse those who sacrificed, and to purify the conscience from sin of those who participated in the ceremonial service. He attributes that efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ and states in verse 14 that with one sacrifice He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. In Heb 9:14 he states that Christ has purged the conscience from dead works. This sacrifice of Christ was not only efficacious subsequent to His death, but also prior to His death, that is, in the Old Testament. He was Surety in the same measure then as He is presently in the New Testament; He is the same yesterday and today. By virtue of that sacrifice Old Testament believers were delivered from punishment, sanctified, and saved in just the same measure as are New Testament believers. Thus, there is no denial here of the matter to be addressed more comprehensively below, but a denial that these blessings were due to the efficacy of the sacrifices.

(3) When the apostle states, “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year,” he is only expressing that upon the Day of Atonement (the day he has in view) it was demonstrated and confessed that the act whereby sin would be removed, that is, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, had not yet occurred, but was anticipated in faith, and that all the ceremonial sacrifices could not remove sin. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). The apostle immediately joins these words to the preceding passage, proving by way of the words “remembrance again made of sins

every year” the impotency of the sacrifices, and that their repetition in the Old Testament taught that the sacrifices neither removed nor atoned for sin, but that the promised Mediator would do so. By His efficacy believers would become partakers of the atonement and not by any efficacy the typical sacrifices would have.

*Objection #8:* “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34). Here we have a pronounced contrast between the Old and New Testaments. In this contrast the forgiveness of iniquity and the not remembering of sin any more are solely and uniquely ascribed as belonging to the New Testament. This forgiveness is expressed by the word *aphesis* (cf. Heb 8:12; Heb 10:17). Thus, Old Testament believers did not have complete forgiveness—yes, they did not have forgiveness in the sense of *aphesis*. Instead, God remembered their sins; they continued to be unatoned for before the countenance of God; God continually upbraided them for their sins.

*Answer* (1) For the exegesis of this passage, and the defense of it, refer to chapter 2 of this appendix.

(2) The forgiveness promised here is expressed by the word *ἔλασ salach*—the identical word whereby forgiveness of sins is referred to in the Old Testament (cf. Exod 34:9; Lev 4:20; Ps 103:3; Ps 86:5). Thus, believers in both testaments have been partakers of the very same forgiveness.

(3) In the Old Testament they also had the benefits of the covenant of grace promised here to the church in the New Testament. The comprehensive summary of this is, “I shall be your God, and you shall be My people” (Jer 31:33). This is promised to New Testament believers, and believers already had the benefits thereof in the Old Testament. The opposing parties do not deny this, but rather admit it—a fact which could otherwise be proven from a multitude of texts. Therefore, that which is promised to the New Testament church has been equally promised in the Old Testament.

(4) The non-remembrance of sin which is here promised to the New Testament church was already a reality in the Old Testament and is expressed with the same word *ρᾶζ (zakhar)*: “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions” (Ps 25:7); “O remember not against us former iniquities” (Ps 79:8); “But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob ... thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa 43:22,24-25); “But if the wicked will turn from all his sins ... all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him” (Ezek 18:21-22);

“None of his sins that he hath committed shall be *mentioned* unto him” (Ezek 33:16).<sup>20</sup>

(5) God promises to establish the covenant of grace in the New Testament, even though both parties agree that it has existed without change from Adam until the times of the Messiah, and will remain so until the coming of Christ unto judgment. Just as one cannot deny the existence of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament, because it was promised in the New Testament, the reality of the forgiveness of sins and a not remembering of sins in the Old Testament can likewise not be denied simply because it has been promised to the New Testament church. From all this it can be clearly deduced that whatever is promised to the New Testament church in this text, already existed in the Old Testament church. The contrast does not pertain to the matter itself, but to the manner of administration and the degree of application. The agreement lies herein: The covenant of grace and all its benefits are as much a reality in the New Testament church as they have been in the Old Testament church.

*Objection #9:* “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:39-40). Since Old Testament believers did not witness the fulfilment of the promises, the ransom had not yet been paid, and they had not yet been made perfect; and whereas New Testament believers have received better things, Old Testament believers did not have the complete forgiveness of sins, and were deprived of all the benefits which flow forth from the complete forgiveness granted in the New Testament.

*Answer:* The promise, which Old Testament believers did not and New Testament believers did receive, does not pertain to the forgiveness of sins, but rather to the incarnation of Christ, whereby He fulfilled all the prophecies and types, paying the ransom for the sins of all the elect by His death. The *better* thing which New Testament believers have is the fulfillment of God’s promises in the long-promised Savior Himself. He had not yet come in the Old Testament, although He was promised. However, to have the thing itself is better than the promise; “to have” is better than “shall have.” The better thing having come, the administration is also better. It is without shadows, and there is more spirituality, light, faith, hope, love, holiness, peace and joy in the

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<sup>20</sup> In the Statenbijbel various forms of the verb “to remember” are used in all five texts.

conscience. If we apply the phrase “that they without us should not be made perfect” to the church in general, then the Old Testament church was not complete as far as membership was concerned; the church was anticipating the addition of more children. All the elect had not been gathered in and New Testament believers still had to be added before the church would be complete as far as her membership was concerned. It is in this sense that the congregation is called Christ’s body, “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). If one applies this passage specifically to believers, it states that Old Testament believers were not made perfect without that fulfillment of the promise which we enjoy: the actual satisfaction made by Christ in the flesh. The text does not deny perfection in the Old Testament. Rather, it states expressly: They have been made perfect. The phrase “without us” does not imply that New Testament believers render Old Testament believers perfect. It also does not imply that Old Testament believers did not attain perfection until the New Testament era, having been imperfect in heaven until that time. In heaven there is no room for that which is sinful, impure, and imperfect. Rather it states that they were perfect by virtue of the satisfaction of Christ, who had not accomplished the act of atonement in their days, but did so during our days in the New Testament. “The promise” is to be understood as referring to the Messiah; “the better things” as referring to the execution of His suretyship upon which a better administration followed; and “they without us should not be made perfect” as referring to Christ’s atonement, which is equally efficacious in both testaments (even though the act of atonement transpired in the New Testament). There is thus no proof for an incomplete forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament—a forgiveness distinguished from and contrasted with the forgiveness of sins in the New Testament.

It is evident from Heb 11:39 that all these matters are as we have stated them to be: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith.” What was the object of their faith? None other than Christ, who had then been promised and who now had come. Abel’s eye was upon Christ when he sacrificed, for thereby he obtained witness that he was righteous. This could not have occurred in any other way but by a faith which looked unto Christ (vs. 4). The faith of Enoch, who was taken up, looked unto Christ (vs. 5). Abraham’s faith looked unto Christ, the promised seed, and thereby he was justified (vs. 12 cf. Rom 4:11-22; Gal 3:16). Moses looked unto Christ, whereby he esteemed the reproach of Christ the greatest of all riches (Heb 11:26). For this Christ they all yearned, and even

though they did not receive Him in the flesh, they nevertheless saw Him from afar, believed in Him, and embraced Him (vs. 13).

Since these two matters are facts (and in our estimation it has been clearly shown that they are facts), namely, that the Lord Jesus has been the same perfect vicarious Surety in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament, and that Old Testament believers have been as fully reconciled with God and have received as complete a forgiveness of sins as New Testament believers, the following questions will be more readily answered.

*Old Testament Believers Had the Spirit of Adoption*

*Question:* Did Old Testament believers have the Spirit of adoption?

*Answer:* Some neither deny that Old Testament believers have been partakers of God's Spirit and of regeneration nor that they were indeed children of God. They posit that believers generally had less light, less assurance, and less comfort, etc. In these two matters there is agreement. Some insist, however, that Old Testament believers did not have the Spirit of adoption, which would enable them to approach unto God as their Father with liberty and a childlike heart, to address Him, "Abba, Father!," and to serve and obey God as a reconciled Father with a free and childlike disposition. They maintain that only New Testament believers have this, claiming that Old Testament believers have always gone their way with a troubled heart, with dread and fear, and as a slave who fears a beating and is compelled to do his work out of fear. They claim that the Spirit inclined their hearts to yield to slavish bondage and to submit their shoulders to the yoke of the ceremonies. They were subject to the slavish dominion of angels, priests, principalities, and devils, who as rulers compelled them to perform their work. Moreover, these insist that this spirit of bondage did not exist prior to, but only from the golden calf incident until the New Testament. They also claim that the unconverted did not have this spirit of bondage. This only occurred in believers, and this spirit worked in them compliance with God's instituted form of worship and its observance by faith.

What poor faith and sonship this is! We completely deny these claims to be true. We acknowledge instead that they had the same Spirit of faith, the same Spirit of the adoption of children, the same access, the same childlike disposition, and the same childlike obedience. The evidence for this is as follows:

First, as Christ was a vicarious Surety in the Old Testament who fully removed all guilt from believers, having taken their guilt upon Himself in order to make satisfaction for them at the appointed

time, and since they had the complete forgiveness of their sins as much as we do, they also had a childlike disposition of the heart, and thus the Spirit of adoption. There is nothing which separates God and man, preventing God from manifesting His fatherly favor and love, except sin. When God removes sin, He embraces the soul in love: “Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it ... for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back” (Isa 38:17). Christ was, however, their vicarious Surety, and God forgave them all their sins. This has been proven in the previous chapter, as well as earlier in this chapter. Consequently, they had a childlike disposition of heart and the Spirit of adoption.

Secondly, both Old and New Testament believers possessed and exercised faith, and whenever faith is lively and active, there will also be this childlike disposition—the Spirit of adoption. That they did indeed exercise saving and justifying faith is evident throughout the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as well as in 2 Cor 4:13: “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed.” They trusted in God: “But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God” (Ps 31:14). Whenever faith is in exercise, however, there is also the Spirit of adoption: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is also peace: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is also joy: “In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8). Whenever faith is in exercise, there is an intimate walk with God: “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23). The Lord Jesus likewise calls His believing disciples His friends: “I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). It is thus a certainty that they had a childlike disposition and the Spirit of adoption.

Thirdly, that Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption—that is, that God made known to them that He accepted them as His children and begat a childlike disposition in them—is evident from the manner in which He led His children.

(1) God made known to them that He was *their* God: “I am the Lord thy God” (Exod 20:2).

(2) He called them *His* children: “Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child?” (Jer 31:20); “Surely they are My people, children that will not lie” (Isa 63:8).

(3) He loved them and made known to them that He loved them: “Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee” (Isa 43:4); “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3).

(4) God showed His fatherly compassion to them in their distresses, and they acknowledged this as such: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” (Ps 103:13).

(5) The Lord refreshed them by His presence and gave to them, upon their prayers, the desires of their soul: “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Ps 145:18-19).

(6) The Holy Spirit taught and guided them: “Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness” (Ps 143:10).

(7) The Lord Jesus dealt with them in a loving manner. He kissed them with the kisses of His mouth Song 1:3, and He called them His love (Song 5:2). When considering all these and other similar dealings of God with Old Testament believers, then I would ask whether God deals differently with New Testament believers. Are there indeed any different expressions in the New Testament? Does He who deals thus with believers give them the spirit of bondage rather than the Spirit of adoption? Truly, if one were to ignore all these dealings and insist that the Old Testament believers had a wretched, slavish disposition, does one then do justice to the workings of God’s Spirit in His children? If one speaks in such terms, would he then not offend the generation of God’s children? We conclude, therefore, from all these fatherly dealings of God that Old Testament believers did have the Spirit of adoption.

Fourthly, consider also the description of the disposition of God’s children in the Old Testament.

(1) “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers” (Acts 3:25); “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants” (Rom 9:4).

(2) They had the same Spirit of faith which New Testament believers have (cf. 2 Cor 4:13).

(3) They were assured of God’s fatherly heart and love toward them, and put their full trust in Him: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (Ps 23:1,4).

(4) They had free access to the throne of grace: “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit” (Ps 51:12); “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee” (Ps 73:23).

(5) They addressed God with the name Father—just as the Lord Jesus taught His disciples in (Matt 6:9). Elihu said: “My desire is that Job may be tried” (Job 34:36).<sup>21</sup> Believers spoke as follows: “Doubtless Thou art our Father” (Isa 63:16); “But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father” (Isa 64:8). The Lord put the word “Father” into their mouth: “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?” (Jer 3:4).

(6) They found delight and joy in the Lord and His service: “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:10); “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:34); “Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing” (Ps 100:2).

Let us consider all the things mentioned together: Those who have Jesus as their vicarious Surety; those who have complete forgiveness of sins; those who have an active faith in God through Christ which engenders peace and joy; those whom God calls His friends and children, dealing with them in a familiar manner as one would with children; those who address God in Christ with the name Father; and those who have fellowship with God as their Father in a familiar, sweet, soul-satisfying manner, and delight themselves in Him—those most certainly have the Spirit of adoption. Old Testament believers had all these, however, and thus they did not have a slavish disposition, but a childlike disposition and the Spirit of adoption.

*Objection #1:* “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). Here the spirit of bondage is contrasted with the Spirit of adoption, and the fruits of the one with the fruits of the other—which are to fear, and to cry, “Abba, Father.” The “spirit of bondage again to fear” is divorced from the New Testament and attributed to the Old Testament, which generally is designated as having been a period of bondage, whereas the Spirit of adoption and the crying of “Abba, Father” is attributed to the New Testament church and denied to the Old Testament church. Therefore, the spirit of bondage was only to be found in the Old Testament, and the Spirit of adoption was only found in the New Testament.

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<sup>21</sup> The Statenvertaling reads: “Mijn Vader! Laat Job beproefd worden tot het einde,” that is, “My Father! let Job be tried to the end.”

*Answer:* First, we categorically deny that what is spoken of here even remotely pertains to the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, we deny that a distinction is made here between believers of both testaments, and that the spirit of bondage is attributed to the Old Testament and the Spirit of adoption is attributed to the New Testament—and thus that they feared in the Old Testament, whereas they cried “Abba, Father” in the New Testament. Until we draw all arguments together, we have herewith sufficiently responded to the objection.

Secondly, the very opposite is proven by the text itself.

(1) Neither in this verse, in the previous verses, nor in those which follow is there a single reference to either the Old or New Testament, or anything that even suggests a distinction between believers in both testaments. To suggest this is only conjecture. If one states that the words “bondage again to fear” and “have received the Spirit of adoption” are indicative of any distinction, we reply that this is *petitio principii*; that is, this is the very principal point itself, which is here denied. Thus, these words do not support the objection at all. This is all the more evident when considering that Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption, and they did cry, “Abba, Father.” This we have proven with four arguments. Moreover, there is also fear in the New Testament: “Afterward shall the children of Israel ... fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days” (Hos 3:5); “Let us therefore fear” (Heb 4:1); “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).

(2) The apostle does not speak in this verse of various persons—some belonging to the Old Testament and others to the New Testament. Rather, he speaks of the very same persons: the members of the congregation at Rome as they presently dwelt there. The text says: “... ye have not received ... ye have received.” If there were but the least possibility that this was so, it would first of all have to be proven that this congregation solely or primarily consisted of Jews. Furthermore, it would have to be proven that these Jews, prior to believing that Jesus was the Messiah, had been believers and converted persons. The disputants state resolutely that the unconverted in the Old Testament did not have the spirit of bondage, but that only believers had the spirit of bondage again to fear. This argument does not even have a semblance of validity, for the church had already been transferred to the Gentiles. God had already deserted Jewry, the godly had in principle already moved elsewhere, and the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. One thing is certain: The church of Rome consisted of converted Gentiles. This can be observed in Rom 1:5-6,13: “... for obedience

to the faith among all nations,<sup>22</sup> for His name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ ... that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.”

*Evasive Argument:* The apostle does indeed speak of the same persons and of converted Gentiles. However, he says concerning them that they were not brought into the state in which the Jewish church had been of old; namely, having the spirit of bondage again to fear, and with fear of heart being subject to the ceremonies. Rather, they were in a much better state—an evangelical state.

*Answer:* We deny that there is such a difference. Moreover, would it make any sense for the apostle to speak to converted Gentiles about the state of believers who lived in a very distant land during a period long gone by—of whose form of worship they had no knowledge and which had already been done away with? Would it make any sense for him to say that they had not come into the state in which the Jewish church had been of old?

Thirdly, the spirit of bondage again to fear is a spirit of fear. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). Whenever there is fear, there is the inclination to subordinate and subject one’s self to the will of those who threaten and inflict suffering. The world, the enemies of God, persecuted the church very fiercely during that time. To confess and experience Jesus was to make oneself a prey of the persecutors who robbed believers of their possessions and their lives. This method was very capable of making men’s hearts faint with fear, and causing them, by way of this fear, to depart from the faith and the practice of religion. It was against this threat that the apostle sought to bolster the believing Romans by stirring them up to be steadfast in the faith and in godliness—even if they were to become subject to physical suffering. That he spoke of a fear for suffering, which caused an inclination to forsake the pathway of godliness and to subject themselves to the bondage of the will of the persecutors is evident in the following passage: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:17-18). However, (thus speaks the apostle) you are children, for you are partakers of the Holy Spirit and have received the Spirit of adoption which cries, “Abba, Father!” You are therefore

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<sup>22</sup> The Statenvertaling uses the word “heidenen,” that is, “Gentiles.”

the heirs of God. You should not fear suffering, for it will not rob you of your eternal inheritance. That inheritance incomparably transcends all the suffering and whatever else could supposedly be gained upon earth if you were to forsake the truth due to fear of suffering. The Spirit you have received is a Spirit of power (2 Tim 1:7); He is a free Spirit (Ps 51:12).

(1) Natural men seek their portion, peace, and delight in visible things. They are slaves to earthly possessions, fearing all that might rob them of those possessions. However, you, being converted, have not received this spirit, this disposition of bondage—the spirit of the world 1 Cor 2:12—so that again you would fear the loss of earthly possessions as you did before. You have received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. This spirit does not engender bondage to earthly possessions; it does not cause fear again as before, but instead gives a free, childlike, and bold disposition to address God as a reconciled Father—to endure all suffering for Christ’s sake in anticipation of the heritage of the children of God.

(2) The spirit of bondage again to fear is a bondage of fear—a being in bondage to earthly, visible things. The converted Gentiles in Rome did not receive again the spirit of the world, the spirit of bondage which formerly made them fearful of all those things which could deprive them of their earthly belongings. Rather, they had been delivered from this bondage. They had now become the children of God and had received the Spirit of adoption which gave them liberty to address God by the name of Father. They had the hope of glory. By way of this argument the apostle stirs them up to godliness and not to succumb because of suffering, but rather that they might glory with him, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” Rom 8:35,37. This is his intent.

*Objection #2:* “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:5-6). In verse 3 the state of the church is defined as being one of bondage, in verse 1 as being the state of a servant, whereas verse 5 states that Christ delivered them by His coming. The apostle contrasts this with the state of the New Testament church, consisting in the adoption of children, which causes them to call upon God as “Abba, Father!” Thus, Old Testament believers did not have the Spirit of adoption.

*Answer* (1) Let us put it this way: In the Old Testament was the

spirit of bondage, during which period the Holy Spirit worked regeneration, faith, and sanctification in believers. In the New Testament there was the Spirit of adoption. The apostle contrasts the two. And then what? One could at the very most conclude a difference in measure rather than of essence, for also in the New Testament the Holy Spirit works through fear. Paul persuades men to faith by way of the terror of the Lord (2 Cor 5:11); Jude admonishes to “save some with fear” Jude 23; and conversion wrought fear in the Corinthians (2 Cor 7:11). Paul himself had fightings without and fears within. Moreover, Old Testament believers had the Spirit of adoption and bold access to the throne of grace, crying out, “Abba, Father!” We have demonstrated this in our proof. They also had peace and joy as we shall show below, and thus the distinction can only be one of measure—with which we fully concur.

(2) The apostle does not speak here of the Spirit of adoption, but of adoption itself. If it were to be construed as a contrast between the Old and New Testaments, the adoption of children as having occurred in the Old Testament would have to be completely denied, for it is connected here with the New Testament in comparison with the Old Testament. However, that is contrary to both Scripture and their own sentiments.

(3) The apostle here demonstrates the benefits and efficacy of Christ’s suretyship among the Gentiles—which the Galatians were prior to their conversion, having been idolaters. “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods” (Gal 4:8). We do not have here a contrast between church and church, but rather between nation and nation. Formerly only the Jews enjoyed the benefits of the covenant of grace, but presently the Gentiles do likewise. They presently also receive the adoption of children.

(4) The sending forth of the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of believers and the crying out, “Abba, Father,” flow forth from their sonship: “... and because ye are sons,” etc., rather than out of the state of the church in either the Old or New Testament. Since no one is a child of God, God sheds forth the Spirit of His Son, who cries out, “Abba, Father.” However, since New Testament believers are as much God’s children as they of the Old Testament, God has bestowed the same blessings upon them, and vice versa.

(5) Understand it to be as follows: There being a contrast here between the Old and New Testaments, it is not one of essence, but rather of degree—as between immature and mature children. They both are children, both have a childlike disposition, and both cry out, “Abba, Father.”

*Old Testament Believers Enjoyed Peace of Conscience*

*Question:* Did Old Testament believers have peace of conscience and spiritual joy in God, or did they live with continual fear in their conscience? Did they live with continual fear and an anxious spirit because they were in an unreconciled state, being accused of sin, being subject to the curse and wrath of God, to which they would remain subject until the Surety had paid—and being in a slavish bondage to the ceremonies?

*Answer:* Some respond to the latter question in the affirmative (however, not in the manner as the ungodly would experience this), and claim that it was God’s will not to pour out His curse and wrath upon them unto their perdition. However, we answer negatively upon this question. These believers did have peace of conscience and joy in God. They were not in such a wretched state. We confirm this as follows:

(1) We have previously proven that in the Old Testament the Lord Jesus was a vicarious Surety in the full sense of the word; that Old Testament believers did have full justification by faith and the forgiveness of sins; and that they were adopted as children and had the Spirit of adoption. When such is the case, there is neither curse, wrath, nor a being accused of unpaid debt; instead, there is peace and joy in God. However, Old Testament believers had all these benefits. Thus, etc.<sup>23</sup>

(2) There are clear texts. Consider, among others, the following: “Thou hast put gladness in my heart. ... I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (Ps 4:7-8); “Truly my soul waiteth upon God” (Ps 62:1); “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee ... God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps 73:23,26,28); “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:34); “... that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance” (Ps 106:5); “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! ... when I awake, I am still with Thee” (Ps 139:17-18); “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me” (Ps 23:4).

He who considers these spiritual frames will be incapable of having such dismal thoughts of Old Testament believers. Are there expressions anywhere in Scripture to indicate that the frames of New Testament

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<sup>23</sup> à Brakel obviously assumes here that the reader can complete the argument himself.

believers are more spiritual, familiar, and joyful than those of Old Testament believers? Furthermore, although Christ had not actually paid for the sins of Old Testament believers, did they not have perfect peace, joy in God, and communion with God in heaven? If the unpaid debt was no obstacle to prevent them from having perfect joy after their death, why then could this be a reason for their state on earth to be a wretched one? We thus conclude that Old Testament believers have had the same peace and joy in God as did New Testament believers. That there was generally a difference in measure was not ascribed to unpaid debt, but to the wisdom of God.

*Objection #1:* Old Testament believers were subject to wrath. “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15). This law is the ceremonial law, which demonstrated that satisfaction for sin had not yet been made. The ceremonial law accused Old Testament believers of sin and indicated to them that they were still subject to divine wrath, and that the curse still rested upon them. The apostle contrasts this with the state of New Testament believers and posits that the ceremonial law ceased upon Christ having rendered satisfaction; consequently there was no longer any transgression which was not atoned for.

*Answer* (1) Such sentiments are very erroneous; they are therefore to be fully rejected.

(2) Even though the transgression of the ceremonial law also merited the wrath of God, the apostle is not referring here to the ceremonial law, but to the moral law. He speaks of the law which stands in contrast to faith; however, the ceremonial law is not contrary to faith. In this as well as the previous chapter, the apostle contrasts justification by the law with justification by faith, declaring that man cannot be justified by the works of the law, since that law engenders wrath. He states that if man is to be justified, it is to be by faith. He posits that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law, but by faith (vss. 1-5). It follows that all who seek their justification in the works of the law will not obtain it, but will remain subject to God’s wrath, since man is a transgressor of the law and has a curse pronounced upon him. If God had given no law to man, he would not have been capable of sinning, since he then would have been neither commanded nor prohibited anything. He would thus also not have been subject to punishment. Since, however, God has given man a law, and man has transgressed the law, the violated law provokes to wrath and therefore cannot justify man. This does not constitute a difference between the state of Old and New Testament believers.

(3) The apostle does not say that New Testament believers are

without the law, nor does he say that they are free from transgression. They have both: law and transgression. It is indeed true that they do not sin against the ceremonial law, as it is no longer in force. However, they do have the moral law and sin against it. Being without transgressions is not to be without atonement, but rather to be without sin.

*Objection #2:* Old Testament believers were subject to the curse. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Gal 3:10). Old Testament believers were under the law, but New Testament believers are not. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

*Answer (1)* This argument does not pertain to the unconverted, but to Old Testament believers. The former are under the dominion of sin, whereas the latter, having been regenerated, are not. The former are under the curse, and the latter are under grace and not under the curse. Had Old Testament believers been under the curse, they would not have been under grace nor have obtained salvation.

(2) The apostle, speaking of justification in Gal 3, shows that it does not proceed out of the law—neither the moral nor the ceremonial law. The Jews at that time mingled the ceremonial laws with the moral law. They separated them from the antitype, expecting to be justified by their actions, that is, by works. Of such the apostle declares that they are far from being justified, and renders them subject to the curse. In the very same verse he adds the following as an argument for his proposition: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). By contrast, he shows that justification transpires by faith, and faith stands in opposition to the law in justification, stating immediately thereafter in verse 11: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.” Thus, the apostle does not speak here of Old Testament believers and of their state—which is the point of contention—but of the unconverted, who strive to be justified by the law and to whom Christ has thus become of no value.

(3) Concerning the passage in Rom 6:14, there is not the least mention made of any contrast between Old and New Testament believers, for the apostle says that sin has no dominion over those who are under grace. The dominion of sin pertains to man being under the power of sin. Sin then compels man to commit all manner of sin, even to obey it in the lusts thereof—as he says in verse 12: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). Had the apostle considered Old Testament believers to be under the law, he would

have said that sin did have dominion over Old Testament believers. However, this cannot be—for to be regenerate, to be a believer, and yet to be under the dominion of sin are contradictory matters. Thus, the apostle, when contrasting man as being under the law and being under grace, is not referring to the Old and New Testaments, but to the unregenerate and regenerate states of man, whoever he may be. To be under the law is to be subject to the power of the law—this being the case in either the Old or New Testament—whereby one is either justified by the law if it is perfectly obeyed, or condemned by transgression against it. The law points out man’s duty; it promises and threatens. Hereby man is convinced that in his natural state he is in direct opposition to the law, that he does nothing but sin, and that the law can neither justify, change, nor sanctify him. To be under grace is to have Christ unto justification and sanctification. He who is under grace, having the blood and Spirit of Christ, is a partaker of the divine nature, and cannot be under the dominion of sin. By virtue of this argument, the apostle admonishes believers to fight earnestly against sin, and exhorts them to the practice of holiness; they have God’s seed in them and have received Christ unto justification and sanctification.

*Objection #3:* Old Testament believers did not enjoy peace of conscience, for they were still conscious of sin. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” Heb 10:19 Peace of conscience is for New Testament believers—for those living subsequent to the satisfaction made by Christ. “How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14). Only subsequent to Christ have believers had freedom to approach unto God. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb 10:19-22). Peace of conscience was reserved for New Testament believers. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb 4:9).

*Answer:* In Heb 10:2 the apostle does not say that Old Testament believers had any remembrance again of sins; that is, that they had terror or trembled due to committed and unforgiven sins. Rather, the apostle speaks of the efficacy of the sacrifices of the Old Testament as contrasted with the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. He denies the sacrifices of the Old Testament had the efficacy to

pacify the conscience, as they were not capable of removing sin; rather, he ascribes that efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ (vss. 19-22). That is the very argument of the apostle in that chapter (cf. Heb 9:13-14). However, His sacrifice had the same efficacy prior to His actual atoning sacrifice as thereafter, for as Surety He had taken sin upon Himself prior to this. Christ is the same yesterday and today—and thus believers in both dispensations have enjoyed the efficacy and fruits of His death, which also include peace of conscience. We have proven this to be true (cf. pp. ###474-475). Heb 4:9 does not speak of the rest of the New Testament, but rather of the rest of heaven (cf. vol. 3, chapter 6).

*Objection #4:* Old Testament believers continually lived in the fear of death. Their continual wish was to have a long life. This is to be observed in David (Ps 6 and Ps 30), Heman Ps 88, and Hezekiah Isa 38. Paul states this expressly in Heb 2:14-15: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Paul speaks of the Jews, for this letter is addressed to the Hebrews. He states that they were subject to bondage—a being in bondage under the ceremonies. They were in fear of death, and were so all their lifetime.

*Answer* (1) Death is unnatural; it is the king of terrors. All Old and New Testament believers would, with Paul, rather be clothed than unclothed (2 Cor 5:4). Thus, fear of death was not only peculiar to the Old Testament, for in the New Testament believers are sometimes very fearful of death. Why else did other believers, who were called to martyrdom, yield? And why would Old Testament believers have been more fearful of death? Was this due to the weakness of their faith? That is possible. Was it because they had such a love to be of service to God’s people, to make God’s name known among the people, and to worship and glorify Him? This would have been laudable. Was it because they would then come short of Canaan? How foolish! Would he who had received the matter itself be fearful of having lost the earnest of it—that is, if Canaan was indeed an earnest, which supposition we deny? Or was the earth more dear to them than heaven?

(2) In Heb 2:15 Paul is neither speaking of the Old Testament nor of the bondage under the ceremonies, even though he is speaking to the Hebrews. The Word of God—and thus the entire covenant of grace—had been proclaimed to the Hebrews. Does this therefore only pertain to the Hebrews? Rather, he speaks of

the fear of death as being a punishment upon sin—a punishment that had been threatened in Gen 2:17 and had come upon all men (Rom 5:12). All men fear this death. The one banishes this fear by reason of his base ignorance, not knowing what follows thereafter; the other does so in proud presumption in order to have glory among men; others do so by considering death to be an unavoidable fate; others have the false notion that they will thereby be delivered from their misery; and some do so by entertaining an unfounded hope of salvation. The apostle, however, shows the true cause whereby one can be delivered from the fear of death—the death of the Lord Jesus received by faith. Through sin man has become captive to the power of the devil, having believed and obeyed him. Thus, to be subject to the power of the devil and to the fear of death and bondage are the results of the sins which have come upon all men, who are all by nature children of wrath. Since man has become subject to the power of the devil through sin, he is in bondage to the devil, is in his snares, is captive to his will 2 Tim 2:26, and desires to do the lusts of the devil. Christ delivers His children from this wretched state, and to that end He has bruised Satan's head, according to the promise made in Gen 3. In delivering His own from the power of the devil, He also delivers them from the accompanying evil: bondage to the devil and its resultant consequence, the fear of death.

This is evident from the text itself. Those who during their entire lifetime have been subject to this bondage in fear are said to be delivered from it. However, when and whereby are believers delivered from it? This would not be during their lifetime, since, according to the opposing view, they would have to be subject to it until their death. Were they delivered from this bondage when Christ died? Then they also would have been subject to the fear of death in heaven, a matter which is a contradiction in itself. Or were they delivered from the fear of death by reason of their own death? This would be in conflict with the text, which declares that they have been delivered from the power of the devil and the fear of death by the death of Christ. Thus, these words cannot be understood to refer to this fabricated fear of death in the Old Testament, but as referring to deliverance from the power of the devil and the fear of death to which man by nature is subject and from which he is delivered by the death of Christ. Man becomes a partaker of this benefit at regeneration by faith. Prior to that he, along with all men, is subject to the power of the devil and to the fear resulting from being in bondage to the devil and sin. It is just like saying that a man who is born blind, but later receives his sight, has been blind his entire lifetime. One

does not understand this to mean until his death, but rather until the moment he received his sight. Likewise here, “all their lifetime” is equivalent to saying, “as long as they were unconverted—until the time of regeneration and faith in Christ.”

*Old Testament Believers Did not Live in Grievous Bondage*

*Question:* Did Old Testament believers live in grievous bondage to governors, priests, angels, and devils?

*Answer:* Some answer affirmatively, and we answer negatively. They did indeed have many tribulations in this present life—as do New Testament believers. They were obligated to obey principalities, and listen to the priests and the prophets, just as we are to do in the New Testament. They were subject to the assaults of Satan, just as we are in the New Testament. However, such grievous dominion and slavery as is suggested we fully deny.

(1) Old Testament believers did have Christ as their vicarious Surety; they therefore also had a true, saving faith, complete justification and forgiveness of sins, the Spirit of adoption, peace of conscience, and joy in God—which has previously been proven. Who shall lay any charge against the elect of God who are in such a state? They cannot be subject to such grievous bondage.

(2) To whom were believing governors and priests then to be subject?—to other governors and priests? Did they become violent toward each other? Was the tribe of Levi lord and master over the other tribes? And did the governors rule over religious affairs and church people in an ecclesiastical sense? These and similar absurdities follow from such assumptions, proving that these propositions themselves are absurd.

(3) Did such dominion by governors, priests, angels, and devils pertain to the body or the soul? It neither pertained to the soul, the conscience, nor to religious practice; these are only subject to God, and one is to be obedient to God alone in these matters. If it pertained to the body alone, it was either a punishment or a chastisement. It was not a punishment, for sin having been forgiven, no punishment remains. If it were a fatherly chastisement, it would not pertain to the point of contention.

*Objection #1:* “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world” (Gal 4:1-3). The apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament church, declaring that it differs nothing from a servant or from a slave, but that it is the same as being under

bondage—under tutors and governors, which are the angels, governors, and priests.

*Answer* (1) Why are devils not mentioned along with these? Furthermore, some governors and priests were thoroughly ungodly people. Wretched child who is subject to such tutors and guardians!

(2) The text consists of an analogy and its application. The analogy is in the first and second verses, and the application is in the third verse. It is a known fact that every analogy is not true in every detail, but only insofar as the objective of the analogy is concerned. This is very evident here, for tutors and guardians are appointed over those children whose fathers are deceased; however, the Father of the church is the God who lives forever. A child who is subject to tutors differs much from a servant. He is clothed better, eats better, is raised in a more relaxed setting, is served, and is not assigned to do slavish labor, etc. The analogy here only pertains to the enjoyment and use of the possession of which the child is the proprietor. The child has no more of this than the servant. However, what benefit did the Old Testament church not possess? It was Christ who had been promised to them in the flesh, but who had not come as yet. The Old Testament church did indeed partake of Him, but they did not actually possess Him as far as His coming was concerned. This is evident in verse 4 which follows immediately: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

(3) Who were the tutors and governors? Were they angels, authorities, or priests? This is absolutely not the case; the text itself states who they were: the elements of the world, the ceremonies. By these they were, so to speak, led by the hand to Christ. These preserved them from errors in religious worship, doctrine, and life. These ceremonies were the foundational principles—the ABC’s whereby they became acquainted with Christ, although they differed much from the matter itself: Christ in the flesh. To these ceremonies they were in bondage. In this way they worshiped—not the ceremonies, for that would be idolatry—and served God by means of this divinely instituted service. These ceremonies were the parameters for their religious worship, and directed them to the exercises of faith in Christ. Thus, there is nothing to be found in this text in support of such a grievous state of Old Testament believers. On the contrary, it describes their blessed state, showing how they had been provided for by God so well; that is, in accordance with the time in which they lived, prior to Christ’s coming.

*Objection #2:* “And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15).

The principalities and powers are the angels, authorities, and priests in the Jewish church. They were as a garment behind which Christ, the eternal King, was hidden. However, Christ by His coming has laid them all aside as a garment and deposed them from their offices, so that they no longer have any authority in the New Testament.

*Answer:* The principalities and powers mentioned here are neither angels nor earthly authorities and priests. These principalities were enemies of Christ, of whom He has made an open show (Greek: *stripped of everything*), as is done to a conquered enemy. The garment implied here is not placed between Christ and those powers which conceal Christ. Rather, it refers to the garments worn by the enemies which were removed from them. If these were the garments of the ceremonies, they would have been the garments of Christ and Christ would have removed Himself. Christ triumphantly led about the enemies—as was customary during that era. The conquered enemies were led about as captives in bonds and made a public display for everyone to see when the general triumphantly made his entry. Angels and principalities were, however, not the enemies of Christ, and thus they cannot be intended here. Even the angels were not types of Christ, and the principalities and priests did not make up the garments of Christ. Instead, the principalities and powers are the devils; they carry this name. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12); “... according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). The Lord Jesus bruised their head and destroyed them in His death (Heb 2:14-15); He made an open show of and triumphed over them.

*Objection #3:* “For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb 2:5). The law has been given by angels (cf. Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2). Thus, by way of the giving of the law, they have been established as masters and gods over the Old Testament church. However, He has not put the New Testament church in subjection to them. Therefore, by denying subjection to angels in the New Testament, their dominion in the Old Testament can be concluded.

*Answer (1)* The fact that the law was given into the hands of Moses by means of the angels does not vest them with the least dominion over the church. No less does the fact that they were the first messengers of Christ’s birth and resurrection give them dominion

over the New Testament church. In both cases, the angels were but ministering spirits.

(2) The text is a comparison between angels and Christ—not between the Old and New Testaments. The apostle hereby wishes to display the eminent glory of the Lord Jesus—just as he does in the previous chapter by comparing Him to angels. “Being made so much better than the angels. ... For unto which of the angels said He at any time ...” (Heb 1:4-5). So it is here: He did not bring the world to come into subjection to the angels, but to the Son, of whom He speaks in the following verses.

(3) To conclude from the negation that since the world to come has not been put into subjection to the angels, and therefore the world of the past—the Old Testament church—had been put into subjection to the angels, is self-contradictory. It would then follow that the church from Adam to Moses, as well as after the giving of the law (and thus prior to the sin with the golden calf, which the disputants focus on), would have been subject to the angels, a supposition they themselves deny. The Old Testament church also existed during that era. There is no evidence whatsoever that the angels were given more dominion over the church subsequent to the incident with the golden calf than was given beforehand.

(4) The conclusion is invalid, for otherwise it would also be evident that whatever does not apply to the world to come is applicable for the past world. This would mean that since the world to come is subject to Christ, the world of the past was not; and since in the New Testament the angels are not crowned with honor and glory, they necessarily were in the Old Testament. What other absurdities could we then deduce by way of such a conclusion? However, the texts speak of a comparison between Christ and the angels in order to demonstrate the excellency of Christ, rather than of a display of the power of the angels in the Old Testament and the reduction of that power in the New Testament.

*Objection #4:* “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:9-10). The “fathers of the flesh” were the priests and the elders of the people. They compelled the people to observe the ceremonial laws, and punished them according to their whim.

*Answer* (1) To be delivered from such fathers of our flesh would be good indeed! It is our wish that we may continue to be delivered from them and that we shall not have such fathers of the flesh

again who would chastise us according to their whim. What a sad state of affairs that would be!

(2) We readily admit that the authorities in the Old Testament governed the people and punished those who disobeyed God and the government. The priests taught the people, guided and directed them in the way of godliness, and exercised ecclesiastical discipline. We also admit that the people were obliged to have respect for them. Thus did matters transpire then, and this is how they must transpire in the New Testament. Both parties—that is authorities and subjects, as well as priests, elders, and members of the church—must do all things according to the precepts of God’s Word, rather than establish their own will as a law in both government and obedience.

(3) We fervently deny, however, that the apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament or of the authorities and priests in those days. There is nothing whatsoever here to indicate that. We deny that the authorities and teachers of the Old Testament have ever been referred to as fathers of the flesh. Let any proof for either proposition be presented.

(4) Rather, “the fathers of the flesh” refer to natural parents; this is the reason why their children are called “children of the flesh.” “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God” (Rom 9:8); “But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh” (Gal 4:23). The text in question only shows that as the primary meaning of “fathers of the flesh,” one is to understand natural parents who chastise their children as it pleases them in order to raise them well. We must adhere to this literal meaning, unless a valid reason presents itself to deviate therefrom—which is not at all the case here. The apostle hereby encourages the believing Hebrews to be patient in their suffering for the faith, by using as an argument the manner in which natural parents chastise their children for their benefit. He applies this to the spiritual, saying that God is exalted above all and thus pursues a superior objective with His chastisements. We must therefore with patience submit to the Father of spirits. He is referred to as such not in contrast with the Old Testament, but rather in contrast with the soul and body of man, whose body is of the flesh from the seed of the parents, and whose soul is created immediately of nothing at the moment of its generation.

*Objection #5:* “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come

salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:9-11). Here is spoken of a battle in heaven (vs. 7)—heaven being understood to refer to the church. The devil was conquered and expelled from the church at the occasion of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension. Consequently, it follows that Satan previously resided in the church and had power to instill terror and fear in believers due to their unrequited guilt.

*Answer* (1) We deny that heaven is to be understood to mean the church. John was in the Spirit; a prophetic vision is recounted here. As long as it cannot be proven that heaven is to be understood as referring to the church, the entire argument is without foundation.

(2) How was the devil in the church? As a member? If so, was it as a common member, or as an elder? Choose either; it is foolishness, no matter what! One cannot be part of the church in any different way; nevertheless, the objectors say that the devil was in the church, since there was a battle in heaven and the devil was cast out. We admit that he, not being in the church, assaults the church from without in both the Old and New Testament dispensations. However, this cannot support their sentiments.

(3) The casting down of and triumphing over the devil is here ascribed to believers; that is, to faithful martyrs who, for the cause of Christ, had no regard for their lives—even unto death. They have overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. This indicates that this did not occur during the time frame of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension.

(4) The event that transpired here did not occur until three hundred years later when the persecutions by the heathen emperors came to an end under the emperor Constantine the Great. We shall prove this later on when discussing this chapter Rev 12.

*The Ceremonies were a Divine Blessing Rather than a Judgment Imposed in Response to the Golden Calf Episode*

*Question:* Were the ceremonies of the Old Testament blessings from God, or were they a punishment imposed in response to the golden calf?

*Answer:* Some maintain the latter; we adhere to the former. As time progressed, God caused His church to grow. In this respect we may distinguish between three phases as far as age is concerned: The time from Adam to Abraham is childhood; the time

from Abraham to Christ constitutes youth; and the time from Christ until the judgment is manhood—even though these occurred under varying circumstances. By reason of Christ’s coming, the church increased in the light, and the closer the coming of Christ approached, the clearer the prophets revealed this mystery. Those who consider the church prior to Sinai to be more eminent than after, and that God penalized them for the sin of the golden calf by imposing a yoke and the servitude of a multitude of ceremonies upon them, are in error. The fact is that the church continually grew and increased; and the ceremonies, being part and parcel of the precious and saving gospel, were and remained singular blessings. We shall show this to be true as follows:

First, that which is a privilege, of eminent glory, and to the benefit of a people cannot be a punishment imposed upon them for a given sin. The ceremonies and the ceremonial service, however, were a privilege of eminent glory and of benefit to Israel after the time of Moses; thus they were not a punishment imposed upon them because of the sin of the golden calf. The first premise is so very obvious to human reason that none will deny it. The second premise is confirmed by the apostle. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way” (Rom 3:1-2); “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises” (Rom 9:4); “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb 5:4). Thus, the conclusion is firm: The ceremonies are not judgments, but are blessings.

Secondly, the Israelites recognized the entire ceremonial worship in all its particulars, not as a punishment, but rather as a peculiar blessing.

(1) They made a show of and boasted of the ceremonies. “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law. ... Thou that makest thy boast of the law” (Rom 2:23).

(2) They were grieved and had sorrow when they had to miss this blessed service (cf. Ps 79-80; Ps 102). “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” (Ps 120:5-6); “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God” (Ps 42:4).

(3) They longed greatly for the exercises of the ceremonial service. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps 42:1-2); “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may

dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps 27:4).

(4) From the ceremonial service they derived the joy and strength of their soul. “To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary” (Ps 63:2).

(5) They delighted themselves in the ceremonies and could not get enough of it. “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house” (Ps 36:8); “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple” (Ps 65:4).

(6) They rejoiced exceedingly when they had the privilege of serving in the temple. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Ps 122:1).

(7) They thanked and glorified God for it. “Praise ye the Lord: for ... He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord” (Ps 147:1,19-20). All this shows very plainly that they did not consider the ceremonial service to be a punishment, but rather as a great blessing.

Thirdly, the gospel is a blessing, not a punishment. However, the ceremonies and all that was ceremonial constituted the gospel. The ceremonies declared to the people that Christ would come; they taught them how Christ would pay for their sins; they sealed to them the forgiveness of sins, received through Christ by faith. Thus, rather than a punishment, they were a blessing.

Fourthly, the state of the church after Sinai and subsequent to the sin with the golden calf was more eminent than the state of the church prior to Sinai. Thus, the laws given them at Sinai were not judgments to make the church more wretched than before. “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deut 5:2-3); “These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb” (Deut 29:1). God had solemnly established the covenant of grace with Israel. This is stated to be a blessing whereby they excelled the fathers. God renewed that very same covenant in a solemn manner in the fields of Moab. Moses even elevated the state ensuing from this event above the state of Israel at Horeb, having in addition to the first transaction the repetition and solemn confirmation of that very same covenant. If the ceremonial worship had indeed been a judgment relative to the golden calf, then a solemn repetition of that covenant which

had been made prior to the incident of the golden calf could not have taken place. Instead, God would have removed Himself further and would have maintained more of a distance from them.

Fifthly, the greater part of the ceremonial laws had been given prior to the sin with the golden calf, and therefore they cannot be a judgment upon that sin. These pertained to the sacrifices, the distinction between clean and unclean cattle, circumcision, the Passover, the firstborn, the washings, the priests, the feast days, and the entire tabernacle along with the altars, the ark, and the sacrifices. All of these had already been instituted and given prior to the sin with the golden calf. Thus, the ceremonies cannot be a judgment upon that sin. Was the gospel transformed into a judgment after this sin? Absolutely not! To suggest this cuts a tender and godly person in the heart, and does injustice to the goodness of God.

*Objection #1:* “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live” (Ezek 20:25). God is the Giver of these laws. These laws were not the moral law, for they were unto life for those who did them (vss. 11,21). Rather, they were the ceremonial laws, which are referred to as the law of a carnal commandment Heb 7:18, as being weak and unprofitable Heb 7:18, and as incapable of giving life (Gal 3:21). God had given these laws to them since they already had broken the moral law, the breaking of which can be no other sin but the idolatry committed with the golden calf. Thus, the ceremonial laws were given as a judgment upon the sin with the golden calf.

*Answer:* First, far be it from the Almighty to be unrighteous; far be it from the holy God to give unrighteous and evil laws! All the laws which God has ever given were good and unto life; this is true for the moral law and the ceremonial laws. “Thou ... gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13); “To keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good” (Deut 10:13). In substance the ceremonies and sacrifices consisted of the flesh and blood of animals; the apostle therefore calls them carnal commandments. The ceremonies were given in order to be united with the antitype, Jesus Christ, and constituted the gospel by which Christ was both proclaimed and offered. However, they were not given to exist and to be performed independently—that is, divorced from the antitype—and in order thereby to bring about atonement. They were too weak and ineffectual to accomplish that. They did not have the inherent ability to make alive; else it would have been unnecessary for Christ to have died. United with the antitype, however, they were both necessary and beneficial. We deny that these laws

which were not good are to be understood as referring to the ceremonial laws. This cannot be proven. Those laws which were not good pertained to the sacrificing of their children by causing them to pass through the fire—and thus pertained to a fabricated worship of idols, as is confirmed in the next verse (Ezek 20:26).

Secondly, the reason for the giving of these laws was not the sin with the golden calf. This is not even mentioned in this chapter—yes, there is not even one word or argument which would lead one's thoughts in that direction. Therefore, to introduce the golden calf here and to propose it as being the cause of the giving of the ceremonial laws is nothing but a fabrication. This is furthermore evident from the fact that the ceremonial laws already had been given prior to the incident with the golden calf; consequently, this cannot be the cause for the giving of these laws. Other sins are delineated here as being the cause for the giving of these laws, namely, the entire sequence of the sins of the people of Israel from their residence in Egypt until the time of Ezekiel. Among them is even mentioned the transgression of the ceremonial laws, such as the desecration of the sabbaths, which pertains not only to the Sabbath of the seventh day, belonging to the moral law, but to the several sabbaths which belong to the ceremonies. Therefore, the reference here is neither to the ceremonies nor to the calf.

Thirdly, God is said to have given these evil laws, not by way of command, but by way of permission, punishing sin with sin. This is very evident in the following verse (vs. 26): “And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb.” Just as God polluted them by way of the commission of sin, so He likewise gave them evil laws. Both occurred by way of permission, that is, by giving them over to themselves. Such a manner of speech occurs frequently in God's Word. “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections” (Rom 1:26); “Because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David” (2 Sam 16:10); “So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Ps 81:12). The judgment God executed upon the sin with the golden calf is described by Stephen: “And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven” (Acts 7:41-42).

The meaning of this text Ezek 20:25 is as follows: Since Israel was so ungodly, and persisted so stubbornly and rebelliously in sin, God departed from them and gave them over to all manner of dreadful idolatry by permitting them to fabricate their own religion and to make laws accordingly. These were not good and

thereby they would not live; whereas by virtue of the keeping of God's laws they would have lived. However, these laws which they themselves had fabricated would be unto death for them.

*Objection #2:* "... to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10); "... and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1). A yoke, the yoke of bondage, is a judgment. The ceremonies are a yoke, however, and thus they are a judgment.

*Answer* (1) What mention is made here of the golden calf? Such would have to be the case, would it not? Thus, it cannot be concluded from this text that the ceremonies are a judgment in response to the golden calf.

(2) Circumcision is the point of discussion here, as it belonged to the ceremonial service. Circumcision had already been instituted several hundred years prior to the incident with the golden calf. Was circumcision therefore also a judgment upon Abraham? How then could it have been the seal of the righteousness of faith? How can a sacrament of the covenant of grace be a judgment?

(3) The gospel is also referred to as a yoke, albeit an easy yoke (Matt 11:29-30). Thus, one cannot deduce a judgment from the word "yoke." God wills that His children be not licentious. Instead, He sets boundaries and subjects them to Himself—that is, to His laws which He imposes upon them as a yoke so that they might be of service to Him. Is being of service to God—being under His yoke—a judgment?

(4) A yoke implies bondage; however, a yoke that is unbearable does not imply judgment, but rather difficulty and distress. A matter is either impossible in and of itself—such laws the righteous God has not imposed upon anyone—or a matter is unbearable due to the weakness of man, a weakness into which he has brought himself. This is true for the moral law which sinful man cannot keep. The very best among men daily offend in many things. Since the moral law is an unbearable burden for sinful man, does that mean therefore that it is a judgment? The same also applies to the ceremonial laws. They were demanding and difficult, and even in an outward sense it was difficult to observe them without becoming defiled in some way. It does not follow, however, that they were a greater judgment than the moral law. They were nothing but blessings, even though they were demanding for the flesh. If someone must journey several miles to hear a sermon, it is indeed inconvenient; however, it is not a judgment, but a blessing, for by way of this difficulty he may still receive the Word.

*Objection #3:* "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added

because of transgression” (Gal 3:19). Was the ceremonial law (this is the law of which the apostle speaks) added to the promise because of the transgression? Then it is a judgment upon sin.

*Answer* (1) Once again, no mention is made of the calf, which is the issue being disputed. This renders the objective to use this text invalid.

(2) We deny that the apostle here has the ceremonial law in view. That would have to be proven. It is just an assumption, and whoever does not wish to believe this is free in this.

(3) The ceremonial laws were already partially in existence when Abraham received the promise. Therefore, the apostle cannot have them in mind. The fact that something is more or less true does not change the nature of a matter.

(4) Even though we do not wish to exclude the ceremonial laws from this chapter, it is nevertheless evident that the apostle has the law of the ten commandments in view. He speaks of that law which brings a curse upon the person who is subject to that law (vs. 10); by the works of which no one can be justified (vs. 11); which is contrasted with faith (vs. 13); and which by angels has been placed in the hands of the Mediator (vs. 19). This law is not the ceremonial law, but the law of the ten commandments.

(5) Paul does not ask *why* or *for what reason* the law has been given, but rather *for what purpose, to what end, and for what use* it has been given. Since the inheritance is not by the law but by the promise, he asks whether the law has then been given in vain. Does the law then have no purpose? “Yes, it does indeed,” so states the apostle; “it has been added to the promises  $\xi\alpha\&\rho\iota\nu$  (*charin*) [for the purpose of], or  $\xi\alpha\&\rho\iota\nu\ \tau\omega\sim\nu\ \pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\alpha\&\sigma\epsilon\omega\nu$  (*charin ton parabaseon*) [to the end], that is, ‘because of the transgressions.’” The purpose was that one would know his transgressions by means of the law, and thus be drawn away from his own righteousness as a means unto justification by seeking the promise in the law. Its purpose is that one would seek to obtain the inheritance by faith in Jesus Christ. Observe this in the following verses: “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:22-24). The apostle shows this to be the purpose in Rom 5:20: “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.” Thus, the phrase “because of transgressions” does not relate to the cause of the giving of the law, as if the giving of the law were a judgment upon sin; rather, it speaks of the purpose for which the law was given: to know sin.

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**CHAPTER SIX**

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**The New Testament Church from the Birth of Jesus Christ to the Revelation of John***The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ*

Having considered the state of the church from Adam to Abraham, and from Abraham to Christ, which constitutes the Old Testament era and the administration of the covenant of grace during those periods, we shall now proceed to consider the New Testament church. We shall commence by considering the birth and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the focal point of all the prophecies. All the types pointed to Him. When the time arrived which God had decreed in His counsel, denominated by Paul as the fullness of time Gal 4:4, God sent forth the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, a priest, and announced to him that his wife Elizabeth (even though they were both of great age) would bear a son whose name would be *John*, that is, delightful one. He would be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, and according to prophecy would go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah. Approximately six months later the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a very godly virgin of the seed of David, and made known to her that by the creative operation of the Holy Spirit she would conceive and bear a Son. She was commanded to name Him Jesus, as He would be the Savior. At the conclusion of nine months, she bore her first born son, who had been promised for a period of approximately four thousand years, and whom believers had already anticipated with great yearning. Subsequent to this, heaven and earth came into motion. An angel announced the birth of the Savior to some

shepherds, which was confirmed by a multitude of angels glorifying God with these words, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). Thereafter the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the newborn Savior wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. They made this known everywhere. Subsequently, prominent wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, asking for the newborn King of the Jews. This caused great consternation in all of Jerusalem. Herod convened the great council of the chief priests and scribes in order to learn from them where the promised Messiah would be born. Thereupon he sent the wise men to Bethlehem. They found and glorified Him by way of an extraordinary star that went before them and remained standing above the place where Jesus was. The birth of the Lord Jesus received even more publicity through the murdering of the children of two years old and under—a murder committed by Herod in Bethlehem and its surrounding region in order to kill the infant Messiah, whom he expected to be among those children. Joseph and the mother of Jesus, having been admonished by divine revelation, fled with Him to Egypt. Upon returning to the Jewish nation, they set up their residence in Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus at twelve years of age so manifested a glimpse of His divinity while in the presence of the doctors in the temple that they were astonished about His understanding.

After Jesus remained in hiding until His thirtieth year, John the Baptist began to preach, baptize, and prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus came to him and was baptized by him. John, knowing who Jesus was, made Him known to the people. Subsequently, the Lord Jesus appeared in public and preached in a most powerful and delightful manner. He showed Himself to be the Savior by performing innumerable miracles which resulted in the healing and deliverance of numerous wretched ones. Consequently the people clung to Him, and His reputation not only pervaded the Jewish nation, but also went forth into various regions and nations outside of Canaan. Since He neither came with external pomp nor made any move toward the establishment of an earthly kingdom and the deliverance of the Jewish people from the dominion of the emperor—and being esteemed by the people above the Pharisees and scribes—they were filled with envy and hatred toward Him, and therefore sought to kill Him. The Lord, upon having finished His course, gave Himself as a ransom for the elect by the accomplishment of His sacrifice. He permitted Himself to be taken captive and to be subjected to all that was prophesied concerning Him—even to His being put to death on the

cross. After the third day He arose again; He ascended into heaven after forty days. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, He poured out His Spirit upon the apostles. By the agency of their preaching in various languages, three thousand people were converted in one day, and as they continued to preach and perform miracles, a large multitude of many thousands of Jews believed in Christ. These blessings were not restricted to the Jews only, but the gospel was also proclaimed among the Gentiles who were very desirous to hear and receive it, and were thus converted.

Prior to this, the Lord, by means of many internal and external adversities, had dispersed a large portion of the Jewish nation among numerous nations under the sun. Of those dispersed Jews an innumerable multitude, in obedience to God's command, came every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the three feasts. Since Easter and Pentecost follow shortly upon each other, most who came from a great distance stayed in Jerusalem in order to celebrate both feast days. The Lord ordered in His providence that Jesus was crucified on the Passover, arose after three days, and that the Holy Spirit was poured out in an extraordinary manner upon the day of Pentecost—and thus a large multitude of Jews received Christ as the long-promised Messiah. This paved the way for the conversion of the Gentiles, for upon returning to their native country, these Jews would recount there all that had happened, namely, all that had transpired in Jerusalem as well as that Jesus had been acknowledged and received by many as the Messiah. The dispersed apostles—and other believers upon arriving in their native land—subsequently gained entrance among the Jews, and by reason of that opportunity, among the Gentiles.

#### *The Gospel Sent Forth to the Gentiles*

As the gospel increased among the Jews, the devil did not sit still. He stirred up his instruments against the Christian Jews. The deeply rooted hatred against Christ and against all who believed in Him and acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, stirred up the chief priests and scribes to persecute the congregations in Jerusalem and Judea to the utmost of their ability. To accomplish this, they stirred up the chief magistrates as much as possible to lend a hand at times in the work of persecution. The more the persecutions intensified, however, the more powerfully the gospel broke forth. At last there ceased to be conversions among the Jews; blindness came upon the entire nation, and the gospel was unanimously rejected. It was thus in this way that the gospel resided among the Gentiles. One must be amazed that the gospel spread so rapidly

among the Gentiles, permeating within a short time Asia, Africa, and Europe. "... their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom 10:18). The Lord was found of them that sought Him not, and was revealed to them that asked not for Him (vs. 20). Thus, all the prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles were fulfilled, and the Lord Jesus received His promised portion: "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps 2:8); "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps 72:8).

The gospel having been confirmed among the Gentiles and the Jewish nation having been blinded, the Lord poured out His wrath in an extraordinary manner upon that ungrateful, wicked, and God-forgetting people—a people who had wished upon them and their children the blood of the Lord Jesus, whom they had rejected and whose death they had required. He gave Jerusalem into the hands of *Titus Vespasianus*, who burned and levelled Jerusalem to the ground in approximately AD 70 or AD 72. This occurred approximately forty years after the ascension of Christ. The Lord dispersed the Jewish nation among all the nations of the earth, and wheresoever they dwell it is in utter shame and contempt—which remains upon them everywhere until this very day. Thus, the city which once was the jewel of all the earth, the perfection of beauty, and the gathering place of God's people for His worship, was destroyed to such an extent that the place was no longer recognizable. The temple, wherein the ceremonial worship had been performed and where God dwelt between the cherubim, was removed along with all the ceremonial services which long since had ceased to have a purpose and had become unprofitable. The gospel, however, was dispersed among those Gentiles who worshiped God in spirit and in truth.

#### *Differences Between the Old and New Testament Church as to the Manner of Worship*

There is a great distinction between the church and her manner of worship in the Old Testament, and the church and her manner of worship in the New Testament. The latter greatly excels the former, doing so, among other things, in these four matters:

First, even though the same covenant, the same Mediator Jesus, and the same spiritual benefits were a reality in the Old Testament as much as they are today, the worship of God transpired by way of physical and visible matters which were shadows of the future Messiah and His works. It was indeed a most eminent blessing that

the Messiah was daily depicted for them before their very eyes, and that by way of external washings they were led to the internal cleansing of the soul. However, as far as the body is concerned, it was a difficult and cumbersome service. It consisted of a multitude of duties to be performed: painful circumcision, a continual watching against touching or tasting something, and a multitude of washings and sacrifices for bodily defilements. In the New Testament, however, all these things have been eliminated, and instead of all physical performances, the Lord has instituted a more spiritual, exalted, visible, and thus a more immediate manner of worship. One now comes to the heart of the matter without shadows. “The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). Now we may enter the sanctuary at once without shadows. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:19-22). No one may presently judge us “in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col 2:16-17). “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal 5:13).

Secondly, even though the church was comprised of various nationalities prior to the calling of Abraham, she nevertheless made little progress, and had little light and glory. After God made a covenant with Abraham, the Lord separated all other nations from him, permitting them to walk in their own ways; however, the church was comprehended among the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. “He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them” (Ps 147:19-20). Subsequent to the coming of the Lord Jesus, however, that distinction among the nations has been removed. Yes, the Lord Jesus has given His old people over to blindness and accepted the Gentiles to be His people. “In every nation He that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:35); “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity” (Eph 2:13-15). The

Gentiles are now followers of Shiloh and are gathered unto Him, Gen 49:10, and the root of Jesse has now become the banner of the nations (Isa 11:10). Now many nations go forth saying, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths” (Isa 2:3); “It was necessary,” says the apostle, “that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad” (Acts 13:46-48). Abraham has thus become an heir of the world Rom 4:17 and a father of many nations Rom 4:17—this because 1) Abraham, being an idolater, was called immediately; 2) his seed was instructed by him; and 3) through his seed the gospel was proclaimed and transferred to the Gentiles, through which they have believed in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham. “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom 9:7-8).

Thirdly, in the Old Testament the entire mode of worship was much stricter and functioned in a more legalistic manner. In the New Testament, however, everything is more evangelical and delightful. Consider the comparison: “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. ... But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” Heb 12:18,22.

Fourthly, in the Old Testament everything was more scarce, fewer people truly believed, and those who were indeed believers possessed those spiritual benefits in a lesser degree and measure. However, in the New Testament there is an abundance of everything. From this issues forth:

(1) A greater measure of the Spirit. “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses” (Isa 44:3-4); “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28). The Lord Jesus having come, He now baptizes His children with the Holy Ghost

and with fire Matt 3:11, pouring it upon them in abundance (Titus 3:6).

(2) A greater measure of light. Thus it had been prophesied: "... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9). And thus it also transpired: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:27).

(3) A greater measure of holiness: "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time" (Isa 60:21-22); "... he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David" (Zech 12:8); "... the Lord ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men" (Zech 10:3,5); "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

(4) More familiarity and freedom in one's communion with God: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" Heb 4:14,16.

(5) More comfort, peace, and joy. "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa 54:13); "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps 72:7).

In light of the above (and other considerations), make a frequent comparison between the state of the church of the New Testament with the Gentiles who are utterly estranged from the gospel, with those heretical assemblies which have the name of being Christian, and also with the state of the church in the Old Testament. Then consider how gloriously our dispensation excels theirs, and:

(1) Rejoice in this. Oh, how the Old Testament believers yearned for this time! They prayed for it, sang about it, and rejoiced in it. And now that we are in this dispensation, should our hearts not be enlarged and rejoice in having all those blessings which they anticipated?

(2) Thank and glorify God concerning this. If the church of the Old Testament was so grateful for the promises of the ministry of shadows, how joyfully our souls ought to praise the Lord! Our

mouths should be filled with His praises, continually giving Him both glory and honor.

(3) Walk therefore in that light in the way of holiness. “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isa 2:5); “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph 4:1); “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27).

We have thus considered the rejection of the Jews and the receiving of the Gentiles to be the people of God. Here the following question needs to be answered:

*Question:* Will the Jewish nation always be a rejected nation, or will the entire nation yet come to repentance, believing and confessing that the Messiah has already come, and that Jesus is the Christ?

*Answer:* When speaking of the conversion of the Jews, we understand this to refer to the entire nation, and not only to Judah and Benjamin who had returned from Babylon and lived in Canaan until the destruction of Jerusalem. Rather, it also refers to the ten tribes. These tribes neither remained together nor are they hidden in an unknown corner of the world, as the Jews fabricate. Instead, they partially intermingled with the eastern nations, forsaking the Jewish religion. Another part, having dispersed themselves among the nations of the earth, continued to adhere to their religion; whereas a very large multitude also returned to Canaan and intermingled with the other Jews. Anna, the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Aser, served God at Jerusalem in the temple (Luke 2:36). Furthermore, very many from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi did not return from Babylon. Among those who did return were also very many who again left their native land due to internal disturbances, and thus were dispersed throughout the entire world among various nations, still maintaining the Jewish religion. James wrote to the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). The dispersed Jews came from all manner of nations to Jerusalem on the feast days for the purpose of worship, as is to be observed in (Acts 2:5-11).

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the entire Jewish nation was dispersed and no longer has a specific residence. We are speaking here of this nation without distinction, and we believe that it will acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament and anticipated by the fathers. This is the general sentiment of the theologians of all ages—even Lutheran and papist theologians. There are, however, also those who doubt this, and some deny it. In order to confirm this matter, we shall not now say all that can be said about it. Rather, we shall only

take two proofs from the New Testament and give them a place of prominence, since they are not subject to any evasive arguments of substance. After having given a clear exegesis of them, the few proofs we shall present from the Old Testament will give us more clarity and steadfastness in this matter.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Romans 11*

*Proof #1:* This proof we derive from Rom 11. We shall give a brief exposition of the entire chapter, since the effectiveness of our proof is derived from the context.

This chapter has three divisions: 1) a question which is presented by way of an objection (vss. 1-2), 2) the answer to that question (vss. 3-32), and 3) the conclusion (vss. 33-39).

*First Division.* The question is stated in verse 1: “I say then, hath God cast away His people?” By *God’s people* the apostle understands the Jewish nation, which he generally refers to as *Israel*—also in this chapter. God had given Jacob the name of Israel after he had wrestled with the Lord, and his descendants were called by this name. In order to eliminate any secret doubts, one ought to know that throughout the entire New Testament the name Israel is never assigned to believers, that is, the church of the New Testament. Rather, it is always understood that this refers to the Jewish nation; that is, in distinction to and separation from all other nations. Only two texts need to be clarified.

*Question:* “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom 9:6-8). Is not the apostle here referring to the believers among the Gentiles as Israel?

*Answer:* Not at all; the apostle does not speak here at all of the Gentiles, but strictly of the Jews. His objective is to prove that God has not annulled His covenant with Abraham and his seed, even though the majority of them have rejected the Messiah, have not believed in Him, and have been disobedient to the gospel. “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect” (Rom 9:6). God has not annulled His promises and covenant, for not all who descended from Abraham were partakers of the covenant and the promises. Ishmael and the children of Keturah did not belong to the covenant, but only Isaac. Furthermore, all of Isaac’s children were not partakers of the covenant and the promises. Esau was cast out as an unholy one, but the covenant and the promises were

Jacob's. And so it goes on, for even though many of Jacob's descendants were unbelievers in whom God had no pleasure, nevertheless God's covenant remains steadfast with him and his seed in his believing descendants, who are accounted as that seed. And thus they are not all Israel which are of Israel, that is, of Jacob. Furthermore, the conversion of the Gentiles did not constitute the confirmation of the covenant of Abraham and his seed, for then the covenant with Abraham and his seed would have been confirmed even if none of his natural seed had been converted. This would be absurd. Paul is speaking of his kinship according to the flesh and God's covenant with them, demonstrating that the covenant remains steadfast with them; that is, with the converted among them, even though many remained unbelievers. Thus, this text neither speaks of Gentiles at all, but only of Jews, nor does it call the New Testament church Israel.

*Question #2:* "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Are not all believers, Jews as well as Gentiles, here called Israel?

*Answer:* No; for the church at that time consisted of Jews, and the Gentiles, as wild branches, had been grafted into the olive tree. The believing Jews insisted that the Gentiles, who joined them and were united with them in the church, be circumcised. The apostle opposed this, declaring that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was of any value or engendered any privilege when it comes to faith, but only a new creature (vs. 15). While continuing to join circumcision and uncircumcision, he declared peace and mercy to be upon those who walk according to this rule; that is, upon the believers of the uncircumcision and of the circumcision. Then he calls the Israel of God, which is indicated by the word "and." If he had not been speaking of both Jews and Gentiles, the word "and" would not fit here. Rather, the apostle is saying that peace and mercy were upon the believing Gentiles as well as upon the believing Jews, thereby exhorting them not to quarrel over circumcision and uncircumcision. "Israel" therefore refers to believing Jews and not to believing Gentiles.

As everywhere "Israel" is understood to refer to the Jewish nation, this is likewise true in this chapter. This is evident from the entire argument of the apostle, the purpose of which is to confirm that God has not annulled His covenant with Abraham and his seed, even though many would remain unbelievers. This covenant would not be confirmed by the conversion of the Gentiles, but by the conversion of the Jews during Paul's time and thereafter. God would indeed annul His covenant if the Jewish nation were cast

away in its entirety—and if this would continue to be so. Note the continual contrast between Israel and the Gentiles. Rom 10:20: “I was found of them that sought me not”; these were the Gentiles. Verse 21 reads: “But to Israel He saith ...” This is likewise true in chapter 11:11: “... through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles”; verse 12: “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world ...”; verse 13: “For I speak to you Gentiles ...”; verse 14: “If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh ...”; verse 15 “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world ...”; and in verse 24 the Gentiles are as branches of a wild olive tree contrasted with the Jews as being natural branches. From all this it is evident that the apostle is here speaking of the Jewish nation, which he calls “Israel,” contrasting it with believing Gentiles. He calls the Jewish nation, which at that time (after the conversion of the Gentiles) had been hardened and cast away by God, the people of God. “Hath God cast away His people?” He does not call them the people of God due to their faith and conversion, for they were unbelieving and disobedient; but because of the covenant which God had established with Abraham and his seed (Gen 17:7). Peter demonstrates this as well: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (Acts 3:25). We have dealt with this more extensively, so that in what follows there can be no resorting to the evasive argument that the apostle spoke of believing Gentiles, or also of believing Jews.

The question is: “Hath God cast away His people?” This question has its origin in what has been stated in the previous chapter. The apostle, having confirmed that faith is by hearing, declares in verse 18 that both Jews and Gentiles have heard the gospel, and that the Gentiles have received it (vss. 19-20), whereas the Jews rejected the Messiah, and thus had become a disobedient and gainsaying people. This the apostle confirms from the prophecies (cf. Dan 12:11; Isa 65:2). Out of all this the following question arises: Since God had established an eternal covenant with Abraham and his seed that He would be their God and they would be His people, did not God indeed break His covenant with this nation and did He not ultimately reject it fully when the seed of Abraham had rejected the Messiah and God had withdrawn His Spirit and grace from them and forsaken them? That is the question—the substance of the first portion of this chapter.

*The second part* of the chapter is the response to this question—which is twofold. The initial answer is brief, thereafter substantiated

by various proofs. The *short answer* consists in a negation and in a confirmation of the opposite. The *negation* is not merely a factual statement, but it is stated with vehemence and indignation: “God forbid!” It is as much as to say, “It should not even enter one’s thoughts.” It is a sin to entertain doubts about this, for it is to doubt the faithfulness and veracity of God. Would God cast away His people? Would God break His eternal covenant established with Abraham and his seed? Would God be unfaithful? Would God not cause His Word to stand firm, and not fulfil His promises? That is impossible. The confirmation occurs by way of the vocabulary of the question, accompanied with an inner conviction: “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew” (Rom 11:2). God will neither do it, nor intends to do it, nor is it possible that He would do it. He is the faithful God; they are His people, and they are His property from among all the generations of the earth. He has foreknown them. The foreknowledge of God whereby a given matter is predestined and predetermined makes this matter immovably sure. God has known and predestined Abraham’s seed, and taken them into an eternal covenant with Himself. It is thus impossible that God would reject His people. They are His people and they will remain His people. He has known them as such and He will know them as such.

The apostle adds various proofs to this, the essence of which is that God has neither cast away His people *entirely*, nor will cast them away *ultimately*. The apostle proves by his own example that God has not cast away His people *entirely*. He reasons as follows: “I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. However, I have not been cast away. Instead, I have been received, do believe, and am an apostle. Therefore, all of Israel has not been cast away.

“Furthermore, not only am I a believer who has been saved, but there is also a large multitude of Israelites with me. It is presently just as it was in the days of Elijah, who was of the opinion that all of Israel had forsaken the Lord and that he alone was left. God answered him, however, that there were yet seven thousand left. Likewise there are yet many thousands of Israelites who are faithful to the covenant, who acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, and who believe in Him. This is therefore a certain proof that God has not rejected His people, but that there is yet a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Then the apostle proceeds to render proof that God will not ultimately, eternally, and completely cast away His people. In verses 7-10 the apostle makes a distinction between the believing

remnant of the Jewish nation and the bulk of that nation who not only were unbelieving, but also had been blinded to the gospel. He shows the cause thereof and the prophecies of it found in Isa 29:10 and (Ps 69:22). Thereafter, he leaves the believing remnant to be what it is and no longer speaks of it. Instead, in what follows he speaks of this blinded nation, as is evident in nearly every verse. He speaks in verse 11 of those who stumbled, in verse 12 of those who have fallen, in verse 15 of those who are cast away, in verses 17-18 of natural branches which are broken off through unbelief, in verse 25 of the blinded portion of the nation, and in verse 28 of those who have become enemies for the sake of the gospel. Concerning this *blind nation* he declares that it would not always remain an outcast, but that there would come a time when God would convert them and bring them to Himself. In their state of exile He still has His eye upon them, thereby maintaining the isolation of this nation. Hereby their conversion, and thus the immutability of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, would be all the more obvious.

Concerning this blinded Israel the apostle asks in verse 11, "Have they stumbled that they should fall"; that is, in order that they would remain in their fallen state? His initial answer is brief, and thereafter he enlarges and proves his answer forcefully by way of four convincing arguments. He answers "God forbid" with the same earnestness, indignation, and abhorrence, saying how God would then break His covenant and not remain faithful to His promises. Man's unfaithfulness would then nullify God's faithfulness—which is impossible. Therefore, he answers indignantly: God forbid; absolutely not; this cannot occur. They have not stumbled in order that they would fall and remain fallen. They will rise again and be converted, being aroused to jealousy (vs. 11). The entire fullness of the Jews will come in again (vs. 12). They will become delightful again (vs. 14>). They will be grafted in again after they have been broken off (vs. 24). After their blindness and the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles, "all Israel shall be saved" by the Deliverer which shall come out of Zion, "and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (vs. 26). They will again obtain mercy (vss. 31-32).

Having determined that blinded Israel shall come to repentance, he enlarges upon this by speaking of its excellency and benefit (vss. 11-15). If their fall be the riches of the world, how much more will this be true for their fullness, for that will be a most excellent change!

(1) Their fall is the salvation, the riches of the Gentiles—of the world. It is not the essential cause, but rather the occasion. "It was

necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

(2) The steadfast faith and the holy life of the Gentiles will provoke blind Israel to jealousy, cause them to be zealous to acknowledge, believe in, and live out of the Messiah who had been promised to them and came forth from them. The apostle knew that it was not yet their time, and therefore he labored that he might save some of them. This obligation also devolves upon us, even though their general conversion will not occur as yet.

(3) The general conversion of Israel, who at present are blind, will bring about much more blessing, light, life, and zeal among the Gentiles than did their fall. “How much more their fullness” (vs. 12); “What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead” (vs. 15). When God will fill this blind nation with His Spirit and grace, resulting in the acknowledging and receiving of the Messiah (David, their king), then a wondrous love, joy, and holiness in believing will manifest itself in them. It will be a more eminent time than the age of the apostles. The church of the Gentiles will be so quickened and revived by the conversion of Israel that her former state will appear to be such as the difference between a dead and a living person. The unconverted will be converted in great numbers, and the converted will become partakers of a wondrous increase in the measure of grace. Oh, what a glorious time this will be! Who will then be alive?

Hereupon the apostle demonstrates the absolute certainty of their conversion by comparing two matters. “For if the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches” (Rom 11:16). The first analogy is derived from their instituted form of worship, whereas the second is derived from a natural process known to all. Among the firstfruits, also the firstfruits of the dough had to be dedicated and sanctified to God (Num 15:20-21). Israel is called the firstfruits of God, for He claimed this nation for Himself from among the nations of the world (Jer 2:3). This is also true for believers (James 1:18). By firstfruits the apostle does not understand so much the Jews who were converted at the beginning of the apostolic period, for he calls them a *remnant* (vs. 5). Such a conclusion would be very weak since many Jews were converted at the beginning, and then the entire nation ought to have been converted thereafter. Rather, by the *firstfruits* the apostle understands in particular Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to which could be added the Old Testament believers. By the *root* the apostle also understands Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

out of whom the entire nation sprang forth as branches. He states that if the one is holy, the other must be holy as well. The word “holy” here does not refer to internal holiness and virtue, but to 1) a being separated from others, as Israel was a separated people unto worship (Deut 7:6); and 2) a being devoted to God (Exod 13:2). The latter occurs by entering into the covenant, be it in truth or in pretense (cf. Exod 19:6; 2 Cor 7:14). Abraham is not to be noted here as the father of his natural descendants, such as Ishmael and the children of Keturah also were; rather, he is to be noted as the father of the covenant established with him and his seed in Isaac, and through Jacob.

The dough is gathered together in a lump. From this lump, something is first taken and devoted to God, whereby the entire lump becomes holy and blessed to them. The root produces such branches as are of the same nature as the root. As the nature of the root is, so is the nature of the branches and the fruits. If, however—thus speaks the apostle—the firstfruits and the root are holy, that is, devoted and consecrated to God, then this is also true for the dough, and thus also the branches are holy. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are holy by virtue of the covenant, then also the entire nation is holy and consecrated to God. From this the apostle concludes that the nation neither will nor can be cast away forever, but will come to repentance and be received again by God. For if that were not to occur, and if they were to be cast away forever, then neither the dough would be sanctified by the firstfruits, nor would the branches be sanctified by the root. Since, however, they are sanctified thereby, the entire nation will also come to repentance.

In verses 17-24, the apostle applies this as a warning to the converted Gentiles. In this warning the apostle makes plain statements about the conversion of the Jews. He warns the Gentiles not to boast against the broken off branches, nor to be proud and conceited, despising blind Israel. For the Jews were the natural branches of the olive tree, whereas the Gentiles were grafted as wild olive branches into their stems—into the covenant established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They do not owe you any gratitude for having entered into covenant with God. Rather, they are the means that you have been brought into that same covenant established with them. You do not bear the root, but the root bears you. Furthermore, you are not to boast against them, thinking that God will cast them away forever. No, as natural branches they will again be grafted into their own olive tree. This is more compatible with nature, is easier to perform, and has better results than that you, being wild by nature, are grafted into their stem.

The apostle proves this from the Old Testament Scriptures in verses 25-27. He calls the conversion of blinded Israel a *mystery*. It was no mystery to anyone that during the times of the apostles a great multitude of the Jews believed in the Messiah. That was known to everyone. However, that this Israel, so hardened and hostile toward the gospel, would once embrace in faith, and with love and joy, the very gospel they now so hated, seemed entirely improbable—and nevertheless, this would transpire. It would not be the conversion of only a few—of a few individuals here and there—but it would be a conversion of the entire nation. “And so all Israel shall be saved”—that Israel, upon which hardening had been imposed, would once become so blessed that it would as yet turn to the Messiah. This does not mean that they will all be truly born again and become partakers of eternal salvation, but that they would all acknowledge and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Savior. And when would this be? “... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (vs. 25). This condition will last so long and no longer, until the harvest of the Gentiles, a multitude foreordained, would, *prior* to the conversion of the Jews, be brought to conversion. This does not mean that there would still be a large multitude left, but rather that when the gospel would have borne its fruit among the Gentiles, it would return to the blinded Jewish nation which would also believe—a fact which would constitute a wondrous change and revival. The apostle calls this a mystery—not because God did not reveal it to him until now, nor that it had not been foretold in the prophetic Scriptures, but because it was neither observed nor understood. He wanted people to know this, desiring that they would view and anticipate this as a matter which would certainly come about. He did not want them to become proud and conceited, and to despise the Jewish nation, but to have pity upon them and anticipate their conversion. This already had been prophesied before, and Paul mentions some declarations made by the prophets. “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord” (Isa 59:20); “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:33-34). Here we can neither argue nor quarrel about whether these texts are to be applied to a different time period, for to do so is to argue with Paul who spoke and wrote being immediately and infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. He states that this points to the time when the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in. He asserts that these

texts indicate that blind Israel will as yet come to repentance—and that is the end of all arguments.

The apostle adds in the last place a proof derived from the immutability of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed (vss. 28-32). In verse 28, the partakers of this covenant are described in a twofold manner in regard to their state. They are described in relation to the gospel, of which they are enemies (and therefore of all the Gentiles who have received the gospel); however, they are the beloved, not relative to their present state and as far as they individually are concerned, but relative to 1) *the covenant with their forefathers*: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and 2) *election*—not in respect to eternal election unto salvation, but to their election as partakers of the covenant. “The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself” (Deut 7:6); “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure” (Ps 135:4). The apostle declares this covenant with them, even though they are presently enemies of the gospel, to be unbreakable and immutable. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (vs. 29). This is always, in all circumstances and for all persons, a matter of truth. Such is also the case with the calling of Abraham and with the covenant which God established out of free grace with him and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. That covenant neither can nor will be changed, God being immutable. Israel, which is blind at present, will therefore not always continue to be cast away, but Israel will again obtain mercy (vss. 30-32). Just as you who are presently Gentiles have previously been disobedient to God and have received mercy by reason of Israel’s disobedience, rejection, and persecution of the gospel, Israel will likewise, though presently disobedient (as was true for you previously), obtain mercy by reason of the mercy which you have obtained from God. When the Gentiles will flow to the gospel in great numbers, and will be filled with a great measure of the Spirit, grace, and holiness, blind Israel, being the people of God by virtue of the covenant, will become jealous of the fact that the Gentiles serve God and are loved by Him. Being aroused to diligence by the mercy and grace of God toward the Gentiles, they will then turn to the Lord. And after God will have concluded the entire nation under disobedience for a long time by giving them over to themselves and leaving them in their blindness and wickedness, He will then be merciful to them all and receive them again in grace.

*The third section* of the chapter is found in the concluding verses—verses 33-36. This is an acknowledgment of the unsearchable

wisdom of God in all His dealings, particularly with respect to His people. This is true relative to judgments and blessings, as well as to all the ways by which God rules His church and leads the elect unto salvation.

When considering all this together, the attentive and truth-loving heart will be convinced that the apostle first concludes that God has not fully cast away His people, the people of Israel, for he himself, along with so many thousands, had believed in Christ, the promised Messiah. Following this, he made a distinction between the converted and blind Jews of that time, declaring, verifying, and confirming that this blind Israel will again return, be received, be grafted in, and obtain mercy after having been in a state of blindness for a long period; that is, after the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of 2 Corinthians 3*

*Proof #2:* This proof of the anticipated conversion of the Jews we derive from 2 Cor 3. This conversion is emphatically affirmed in verse 16: “Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” In order to understand the thrust of this verse, one needs to consider the context. The obscurity some consider to be in this text proceeds from a misunderstanding of the word “veil.” They understand this “veil” to refer to the ceremonial worship, and “the end of that which is abolished” (vs. 13) to Christ. The extent to which this misses the mark will become evident by examining the context.

The apostle is generally engaged in showing that the justification of the poor sinner cannot be acquired by the law—neither by the moral law nor the ceremonial law when considered in and of themselves without being united to the antitype Christ, who is the soul of the ceremonies. The Jews understood the ceremonial law as such, considering it to be of the same nature as the moral law and therefore sought their justification in its observance. This is also the apostle’s objective in this chapter, where he speaks of the ministry of death and condemnation, and of the ministry of righteousness.

In this chapter, the Old Testament and its administration according to God’s institution is not contrasted with the New Testament and its administration. It will become evident that the entire contents of this chapter contradict this; and the matters which are contrasted contradict this as well. Who would dare to say that the Old Testament and the administration of the ceremonies, the ceremonial worship as instituted by God, were a ministry of death

and condemnation? Could the holy and good God bind man to such a ministry? Far be this from the Almighty! When the ceremonial worship was performed according to God's institution—that is, by faith, leading the type to the antitype, and uniting the antitype, Christ, with the types—believers served the Lord in a spiritual sense, and that ministry was unto life for them. On the contrary, to those in the New Testament who cling to external matters, not progressing to the exercise of a true faith in Christ, the ministry of the New Testament is a ministry of death and condemnation—a savor of death unto death (2 Cor 2:16). The old administration could be performed in a spiritual manner, and the new administration can be performed in an external manner. Thus, the contrast here is not between the Old and New Testaments, but between *the letter and the Spirit*. The ministry of the Spirit is exalted above the ministry of the letter.

The elevation of the ministry of the Spirit above the ministry of the letter occurs in three ways: 1) relative to what follows (vss. 6-7,9); 2) relative to its glory (vss. 7-11); and 3) relative to its manner (vss. 12-18).

First, that which emanates from the letter and the Spirit is the following: “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (vs. 6). “The letter” is not to be understood to refer to the Old Testament and its administration (that the Old Testament is neither an external covenant, nor consists in the inheritance of Canaan, has been demonstrated at the appropriate place), for the Holy Spirit was also present in the Old Testament and that administration was also spiritual. Else no one in the Old Testament could have saved nor would have been able to please the Lord—not even Abel, whose sacrifices pleased the Lord (Heb 11:4). Thus, the Old Testament cannot be contrasted with the Spirit. Nowhere is this done, just as the Old Testament is never referred to as the letter.

“The letter” is also not to be understood as referring to the ceremonies, for in this chapter the apostle is specifically and literally focusing upon the moral law: “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones ...” (vs. 7). When the countenance of Moses shone as he descended the mountain, he held two tables of stone upon which the moral law had been recorded (Exod 34:29-30). However, by “the letter” the apostle understands the moral law in 1) its demand, “do this,” 2) its promise, “the man that doeth these things shall live by them,” and 3) its threat, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” If man adheres to the external aspect of the law and if he seeks his righteousness and

salvation in this law, he cannot be saved. The ministry is a ministry of death and condemnation for him. If we assume (even though it is not true) that the apostle understood “the letter” to refer to the ceremonial laws—like the Jews considered them, namely, as being of one and the same nature as the moral law, divorced from the antitype, their observance consisting in external deeds—then the ministry was indeed a ministry of death and condemnation whereby no salvation could be obtained.

Therefore, “the letter” is to be understood as referring to the moral law in its demands, promises, and threats—as being a condition of the covenant of works. Add to this the observance of the ceremonial law in regard to the external deeds, divorced from the antitype. It is this letter the apostle refers to as “the ministry of death” (vs. 7), and “the ministry of condemnation” (vs. 9), because man is not able to keep it, but transgresses it and thereby brings the curse due upon transgressors upon himself.

Over against this, he posits that which emanates from the Spirit. By “the Spirit” he understands Christ (vs. 17). “The Lord is that Spirit.” As Surety, Christ has rendered payment for all guilt by His suffering and death, and has by His obedience merited perfect holiness for His own. The ministry of the Spirit is the gospel in which Christ is offered and men are allured to come to Christ to be justified by His merits. This ministry *makes alive*. Hereby man is regenerated, justified, sanctified, and led to eternal salvation. By the covenant of works, that is by the law, no flesh can be justified. This is an impossibility as far as the law is concerned, for the law has been rendered ineffectual by the flesh (Rom 8:3). However, through Christ the ministry of the gospel has been held forth unto justification and life—in the *Old Testament in its promise, and in the New Testament in its fulfillment*. This is the first contrast, by which the ministry of the Spirit, that is, of Christ, is so eminently elevated above the covenant of works—its condition being the law of the ten commandments, engraven with letters upon tables of stone, and considered in its internal demands. As such there is no comparison, for the one kills and the other makes alive.

The second distinction between the letter and the Spirit by which it is evident that the ministry of the Spirit is more excellent than that of the letter is the glory which is manifested in its administration (vss. 7-10).

*The letter* had glory relative to:

- (1) the matter itself, its contents being love and pure holiness unto the glory of God;
- (2) its being given upon Mt. Sinai, which in every respect was

awe-inspiring: the voice, the fire, the annunciation, and the inscribing upon tables of stone; and

(3) its messenger, Moses, whose face shone to such an extent that when he came down the mountain with the tables of the law, one could not endure the shining of his countenance.

*The Spirit* had glory relative to:

(1) The Person of Christ, the express image of His Father's glory, of whom the Father declared with an audible voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He revealed a glimpse of this glory upon the holy mountain.

(2) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost upon the apostles, whereby they proclaimed the great deeds of the Lord in various languages, inspiring awe in all who heard them; as well as thereafter upon believers, whereby the assembly of believers inspired such fear that no one else dared to join with them.

(3) The matters related to His administration; that is, the justification of the sinner to the glory of the righteousness, wisdom, and free grace of God.

(4) The efficacy of His ministry in illuminating, converting, and rejoicing souls.

Consider these two and compare them with each other. You will find that whatever is glorious has not even been glorified when considering how eminently the glory of the Spirit excels the glory of the letter. The glory of the letter, when compared with the glory of the Spirit, is extinguished, obscured, and becomes black, so to speak.

The third aspect in which the Spirit is more excellent than the letter is the manner of administration. Moses' administration of the letter was accompanied by a veil (vs. 13>), whereas the ministry of the Spirit consists in an uncovered countenance, observing not the glory of Moses, but the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ (vs. 18). The apostle dwells on this veil a bit longer in order to demonstrate the difference between the letter and the Spirit—between the law and Christ.

By the veil one is not to understand the ceremonies, for:

(1) the literal reference here is to the moral law inscribed with letters upon tables of stone (vs. 7);

(2) the ceremonies were not given to cover or conceal their antitype, Christ, but to reveal Him and by them to lead men to Christ;

(3) Old Testament believers were strongly encouraged to look to Christ—yes, not to do so was sin.

*Evasive Argument:* It was indeed not the objective of the ceremonies to conceal Christ, but the outcome was such due to the foolishness of men.

*Answer* (1) This is contrary to the text, which does not speak of an outcome due to chance, but of a deliberate purpose and objective, using the word “that.”

(2) Many looked unto Christ through the ceremonies, doing so with intensity, longing, and yearning. Thus, the ceremonies did not have this effect with all. The best among them were those who “could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” Thus, one cannot understand the veil to refer to the ceremonies, and the most significant purpose of the ceremonies was therefore not the concealing of Christ. Instead, the veil upon Moses’ countenance was a depiction of the veiling of the glory of the moral law as to its demands, promises, and threats, lest one would cling to that and seek his justification and salvation thereby. This would be ruinous for them and therefore the covering of Moses’ countenance was a blessing; it kept them from a way which would not lead them to salvation. There was indeed glory in the law, but it could not justify man, as it had become ineffectual through the flesh. One may thus not cling to the law in that manner.

“The end of that which is abolished” does not refer to Christ, for:

(1) Christ is here contrasted with the letter, and thus He cannot be the end of the letter.

(2) They were indeed permitted to look intently upon Christ. They were obligated to do so, for to forbear doing so was sin. The purpose of this veil, however, was not to look stedfastly to the end, but to restrain anyone from doing so. Instead, “by the end of the letter” one is to understand the justification of man by the works of the law. To that end the law had been given to Adam, and in the keeping of the commandments is eternal life. *The man who does these things shall live by them.* That end neither can nor may be pursued in living according to this rule, for man cannot attain that end by the keeping of the law. If he were to cling to such keeping of the law, he would find himself deceived at last.

*That which is abolished* is the letter, that is, the moral law—not as far as its end is concerned whereto it had been given upon Sinai—to be a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant, who do not seek their justification in the law, but rather in Christ. Instead, it is abolished by believers as far as:

(1) Being justified thereby, justification being impossible by way of the law due to sin. In this respect Christ takes the place of the law, relative to which the apostle says: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4).

(2) Its condemning power over all who transgress the law—as believers have done and do daily. “Christ hath redeemed us from

the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). Moses’ veil was an indication that they had to look away from the law so as to be justified thereby. Instead, they had to be led by the law as a schoolmaster to Christ.

The apostle applies this to the present state of the Jews in their blindness, doing so by transposing this to another matter (vss. 14-16). The apostle does not understand the veil to refer here to that which was upon Moses’ countenance, but by way of analogy he refers to something that lays upon them as a covering veil. This veil is not upon their countenance, but upon their heart, intellect, and will. He understands hereby the ignorance and blindness of the heart of which the prophet speaks: “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isa 6:9-10). The apostle applies this to Israel and its blindness during his time (Acts 28:26). This darkness lies upon them as a veil in the reading of the Old Testament, wherein Christ is clearly portrayed. They do not see Him there, however, and this veil remains upon them until this present day, and will remain upon them until it is done away for them in Christ. And indeed, it will once be taken away. They will one day turn to the Lord, as the apostle states in plain language in 2 Cor 3:16: “Nevertheless when it (*the people of Israel, and not this or that person*) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” They will then know Christ, receive Him, and believe in Him, and with us “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” will be “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,” Amen.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Matthew 23:38-39*

*Proof #3:* This proof is derived from Matt 23:38-39: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.” Here we have a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 38), followed by Christ being hidden from them. This is the blindness of Israel of which we have spoken in light of Rom 11. Here we have the designation of a time frame: “till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh.” There will come a day that they will say, “Blessed is He that cometh”; “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26). Until then they will neither see,

know, nor acknowledge Jesus—however, no longer than that. Christ will then come again to His old people Israel and they will then be turned again.

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). The Lord Jesus prophesied of the eradication of the Jewish nation and of the subsequent dispersion of the Jews among all the nations, as well as the long duration of the desolation of Jerusalem, designating the time when this dispersion and desolation would end as being when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. This is identical to what the apostle says: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11:25). The word “until” does not imply “never,” but rather a certain moment; that is, after that time, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in. Then will Israel no longer remain blind, and then Israel will repent, as is stated expressly in verse 26: “And so all Israel shall be saved.” The partial conversion during the time of the apostles is not the global conversion of Israel, but that of a small remnant. However, the blinded part of Israel would also be converted when the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in, and thus will all Israel be saved. If, therefore, their dispersion and the treading down of Jerusalem will last *until* the times of the Gentiles will have been fulfilled, there will most certainly be a restoration of the nation, not only in a spiritual sense, but also in a physical sense. This we shall now consider.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Isaiah 61:1-4*

*Proof #4:* We derive this proof from Isaiah 61. “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings ... to proclaim liberty to the captives” (vs. 1); “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (vs. 2); “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes ... that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (vs. 3); “And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (vs. 4); “But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves” (vs. 6); “For your shame ye shall have double; and for

confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them” (vs. 7). Here a most excellent restoration of Israel after her destruction is prophesied—according to body and soul. Nothing can be construed against this, except if one were to maintain that the prophet is speaking of the deliverance from Babylon. Since it is a certainty, however, that after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 40 A.D., and the dispersion of the Jews by them, there will be a general restoration of the Jews—as we have previously shown from the New Testament—one would have to show from this text that the reference here is to the deliverance from Babylon rather than to their last conversion.

*Objection:* This is the point of contention, namely, whether such a conversion is to be anticipated.

*Answer:* If the matter itself has been confirmed from other texts, and one then arrives at this text, the point of contention is: Of which of the two deliverances does this text speak? If one claims that the reference is to the first, one will have to prove this to be so. However, let us consider the text by itself, and it will be proven that the reference here is not to the deliverance from Babylon, but to a deliverance of Israel which as yet has not transpired, but will occur.

(1) This deliverance after a lengthy desolation would occur after the coming of the Messiah. This is evident when we compare verses 1-3 with Luke 4:14,21, where the Lord Jesus, having read this prophecy, states, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

(2) This conversion and restoration would take place after a desolation of Canaan, the duration of which would be from generation to generation. It cannot be said of the captivity in Babylon, which lasted but seventy years, that it lasted from generation to generation, for the same generation returned. There were those among them who still had a good memory of the glory of the first temple (Ezra 3:12).

(3) They did not receive double after their deliverance from Babylon—also not spiritually. Generally speaking, they were buried under a deep layer of ignorance, superstition, and ungodliness. How wretched was their condition when Christ came! After this deliverance, however, Israel would be “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” This was also not true in physical terms, for during the entire period from the restoration from Babylon until the destruction of Jerusalem, which is a period of approximately five hundred years, they have experienced nothing but unrest, troubles, wars, and their land being

occupied. They did not possess their land, but were cast out—as is the case until this day.

(4) Israel would be adorned with an extraordinary luster and glory after this deliverance. They would be called priests of the Most High. In the Old Testament, the priestly office was limited to the tribe of Levi, to the house of Aaron, while other tribes were barred from this. However, here a time is prophesied of when the entire nation would thus be glorified, and all would approach unto God, as did the priests. After their deliverance from Babylon they have never been in such a state as is promised here. “And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed” (Isa 61:9). From all that has been said it is evident that this text does not speak of the deliverance from Babylon, but of a conversion and restoration which as yet is to be anticipated, and which is promised here in certain terms.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Jeremiah 31:31-40*

*Proof #5:* This proof we derive from Jer 31. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (vs. 31); “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people” (vs. 33); “... they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (vs. 34); “If those ordinances (that is, of day and night) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever” (vs. 36); “If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord” (vs. 37); “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord” (vs. 38); “And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron (*these were unclean places*) ... shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever” (vs. 40). That the spiritual benefits recounted in verses 33-34 are the benefits of the New Testament, and that the Gentiles have become partakers of them, is a certainty. However, the Gentiles would not be the sole partakers of these benefits; the text states that Israel and Judah will also partake of them. The names of Israel and Judah refer to the Jewish nation. They never refer to the church—the believers among the Gentiles. These are never denominated by

the names of Israel and Judah in the New Testament. Not only would a remnant become believing, but they would “all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them”; that is, the entire seed of Israel would not be cast away, but would be saved. This would occur after a great destruction and dispersion. Jerusalem would be rebuilt and be further expanded, and also the unclean places in Jerusalem would be removed. There is no room for an exception here, namely, that mention would be made here of the deliverance from Babylon, for:

(1) all that has been related would occur after the coming of the Messiah (vs. 22), and after the infanticide at Bethlehem (vs. 15);

(2) after the restoration from Babylon, Israel did not partake of these benefits in either a spiritual or physical sense—a fact which is beyond dispute;

(3) they were removed and broken down after five hundred years. This restoration, however, would be of everlasting duration. It is thus evident from these texts that the Jewish nation will once most certainly be converted, and be re-established in her country.

*The Future Conversion of the Jews Examined in Light of Hosea 3:4-5*

*Proof #6:* “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days” (Hos 3:4-5). This text speaks of the children of Israel, the Jewish nation. It is prophesied to them that they will experience a lengthy desertion during which they will be devoid of a leader, true religion, and idolatry. Hereupon it is prophesied that they will return in the latter days and will acknowledge and receive Christ as the Messiah. From this it can be clearly perceived that we are to anticipate a general conversion of the Jews who as yet are in this state as is described here. One could advance the evasive argument here that the reference is to the deliverance from Babylon, but the texts show the contrary to be true.

(1) While in Babylon, Israel had not been in the state which is described here. They still had princes and governors who ruled them with the permission of the kings of Babylon. They still had priests and prophets to teach them, and also their captivity did not last long.

(2) Neither during nor after their Babylonian captivity has Israel turned to the Lord in the manner described.

(3) Their restoration was to be after the coming of the Messiah.

They would seek and turn to David their king—the Messiah—and would acknowledge Him to be the true, promised Messiah.

(4) This would transpire in the latter days, which is an expression generally understood to refer to the New Testament (cf. Isa 2:2; Joel 2:28 in conjunction with Acts 2:17; Mic 4:1; Jer 23:20). Thus, this cannot be understood as referring to the restoration from Babylon. Rather, it proves that such a conversion is yet to be anticipated.

He who wishes to have at his disposal more texts wherein this conversion is prophesied ought to consider the following texts which we will make note of in order to prove that not only will the Jews turn to the Messiah, but also that they will again dwell in Canaan.

*Proof #7:* In addition to the above six Scripture passages pointing to the anticipated conversion of the Jews, consider the following:

(1) Throughout the world the Jewish nation remains isolated, even though the genealogies have been lost. The Jews do not intermingle with the nations among whom they live—neither by marriage, nor by way of religion. They also stand out among all the nations, no matter in what land they reside.

(2) They still adhere to the externals of the Jewish church, such as circumcision, feast days, distinction among foods, and a careful avoidance of idolatry.

(3) They preserve the Holy Scriptures very carefully and acknowledge their divinity.

(4) They still expect the Messiah to come to deliver them.

Even though these matters do not prove that their conversion will occur, nevertheless, when added to the quoted prophecies, the heart will be inclined all the more quickly and powerfully to believe these prophecies. God's providential dealings with this nation are still very evident. He is preserving her until her conversion, in order that the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning her will be all the more obvious.

#### *The Return of the Jews to Canaan Proven from Various Old Testament Passages*

One more question remains to be answered: Will the Jewish nation be gathered together again from all the regions of the world and from all the nations of the earth among which they have been dispersed? Will they come to and dwell in Canaan and all the lands promised to Abraham, and will Jerusalem be rebuilt?

We believe that these events will transpire. We deny, however, that the temple will be rebuilt, and that therein the previous mode of worship will be observed, which prior to Christ's coming was of a typifying nature and would then be of a reflective nature. We also

deny that Israel will then have dominion over the entire world—and other such things which the Jews imagine and some Christians dream about. Rather, they will be an independent republic, governed by a very wise, good-natured, and superb government. Furthermore, Canaan will be extraordinarily fruitful, the inhabitants will be eminently godly, and they will constitute a segment of the glorious state of the church during the thousand years prophesied in Rev 20. We shall not enlarge here by vindicating every text over against evasive arguments one could construe—as if those texts referred to the deliverance from Babylon. They could easily be refuted from the answers already given to evasive arguments, and by the attentive examination of texts, comparing them with the actual state of Israel’s restoration from Babylon.

We prove this from the two passages we have dealt with: Isa 61:1-9 and (Jer 31:31-40). We have refuted those evasive arguments against these texts, for they state expressly that the Jews will again return to their land, and that both their ruined places and Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Consider in addition to this the following texts.

Deut 30:1-6: “... when all these things are come upon thee”—namely, “that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom” (Deut 29:23). This did not occur during the Babylonian captivity, as the land remained fruitful and was cultivated. Canaan was in this condition after the destruction of Jerusalem (and it is nearly still the case)—“thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God ... with all thine heart, and with all thy soul (which occurred neither upon their return from Babylon nor thereafter); that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee *above thy fathers*. (This did not occur at all after the Babylonian captivity, as those times bore no resemblance whatsoever to the times of David, Solomon, and other kings. There was continual warfare and external dominion, and there were continual troubles within.) And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” Since these things will most certainly befall Israel, and since this

has occurred neither in a spiritual nor in a physical sense after the Babylonian captivity, then such a spiritual conversion and a restoration to the land of Canaan is still to be anticipated.

Amos 9:14-15: “And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities. And I will plant them upon their land, *and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land* which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.” However, after the Babylonian captivity they only possessed the land for five hundred years, having then been evicted from their land until this very day. Thus, this conversion is yet to be anticipated.

Ezek 37:21-25: “I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land ... and one king shall be king to them all (*they did not even have a king after Babylon*). ... And David (*Christ*) My servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and My servant David shall be their prince for ever.” Israel did not experience this after the Babylonian captivity—neither spiritually, nor physically. This would occur in the days of the Messiah, after His coming—after which the Jews did not reside in the land of Canaan from generation to generation. Instead, the land has been destroyed and they have been dispersed. Thus, that time is yet to come.

Isa 62:1-4: “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” Israel is referred to as such in these days. She is the forsaken one and her land is desolate. Therefore, this cannot be said of them after the Babylonian captivity. During this period Israel was also not in the glorious state spoken of here. Thus, it is yet to come.

“... Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein” (Zech 2:4); “... and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem” (Zech 12:8);

“In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David” (Zech 12:8); “... and it (Jerusalem) shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place” (Zech 14:11); “And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited” (Zech 14:11). Jerusalem has not been in such a state after the Babylonian captivity; she has been fully destroyed, and is now in a state of exile. It is therefore not applicable to the return from Babylon, but to a period of time yet to come. From all this it is clearly evident that the Jewish nation will yet be converted, come to her land Canaan, and reside there.

*Evasive argument:* All the texts quoted above speak of the glorious state of the church of the New Testament, and all these expressions are to be understood as referring to spiritual matters, rather than to the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to Canaan.

*Answer:* This is being asserted, but has not been proven. With every text we have shown emphatically that they speak of Israel and what would befall them according to soul and body.

*Objection:* “And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined ... and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan 9:26-27). Here it is stated that it has been determined that there will be desolations until the end. Thus, the Jewish nation will neither be converted, nor return to Canaan to possess it.

*Answer:* The angel Gabriel not only made known to Daniel their deliverance from Babylon, but also the time when the Messiah would be born, suffer, and die in Canaan, as well as how the Jews would fare in Canaan. There would be continual warfare there until Jerusalem would be destroyed to the ground—a destruction that was most surely decreed and would therefore certainly come to pass. No mention is made of what would befall the Jewish nation and Jerusalem after their destruction, but rather that which would precede their destruction and that which would befall them shortly before the death of Christ: warfare until the end.<sup>24</sup> This does not refer to the end of the world, but of Jerusalem. The warfare would not cease until Jerusalem would be destroyed in a dreadful manner by the

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<sup>24</sup> The equivalent phrase of the KJV “and the end thereof shall be with a flood,” reads as follows in the Statenbijbel: “en tot het einde toe zal er krijg zijn,” that is, “there shall be war until the end.”

Romans, the destruction of which would signal the end of the warfare. Thus, this text does not speak against the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to their land.

*Various Reasons Given for Focusing upon the Conversion of the Jewish Nation*

We have not considered the conversion of the Jewish nation and her restoration to Canaan merely for the purpose of ascertaining this to be so, and to end in this as a matter for contemplation. Rather, we have done so in order that we would be exercised to engage in the performance of various duties.

(1) Attentively observe the immutability of the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed. Consider that God, in spite of all their sins and stiffneckedness under it, does not break His promise nor will He permit any of the good words spoken to them to fall to the earth. Believers, glorify God concerning this and be strengthened thereby as to the immutability of the covenant of grace and its promises, which God will most certainly fulfill to you. Therefore, anticipate their fulfillment with faith and patience.

(2) Do not despise the Jewish nation. “Boast not against the branches” Rom 11:28, the natural branches of that olive tree into which you, as branches of a wild olive tree, have been grafted contrary to nature. “Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom 11:28). 1) They have received more than enough contempt from the unconverted. 2) They are in one and the same covenant with Abraham, their father. 3) “They are beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (Rom 11:28). Therefore, let there be the love of benevolence toward them. They are the children of the covenant (Acts 3:25). 4) They will once be converted and be a glorious and holy people above all the nations on the face of the earth. Therefore, esteem, honor, and love them.

(3) Have pity upon their state, which is so wretched according to the flesh, being despised and detested among the nations—this is a righteous judgment of God upon them for their rejection of Christ. They are even more wretched spiritually. They hate the Lord Jesus, the true Messiah, with an evil hatred, and are living without the true religion—yes, have a religion which does not even resemble a religion. Nevertheless, they find a wonderful delight in it; thus they live in a state in which they cannot be saved, but have nothing to look forward to but eternal damnation.

(4) Pray for their conversion. How they have prayed for the conversion of the Gentiles! How they rejoiced in the prophecies that one day the Gentiles would be converted! Therefore, you

ought to do likewise for their conversion, for you can pray this in faith, since they will certainly be converted.

(5) By way of a holy life show that you are walking in the footsteps of their father Abraham. The life of many so-called Christians offends them and keeps them from exercising faith in Christ. They do not know, except it be to a very limited extent, that among Christians there are presently many who fear and love *Jehovah*, the God of Israel. Therefore, manifest the image of Christ by way of a holy walk, so that they may be convicted by it and yet be aroused to jealousy. Occasionally make use of opportunities to speak in a friendly manner with them, making your affection known to them, as well as your anticipation of their restoration in Canaan. Speak to them about the Lord Jesus by the name of Messiah. Speak of the dreadfulness of sin and of eternal damnation to follow upon sin, and show this from the Scriptures of the Old Testament if you are able to do so. Show them that man cannot be justified before God by works, and that all their deeds cannot justify them. Show them from the Old Testament that the Messiah would make satisfaction for sin by His death, reconcile God with man, and convert souls, proving this from Isa 53, and Dan 9. Perhaps you would be instrumental in the salvation of one. The fact is that in doing so you have done your duty, and it will be a delight to your soul that you have done so. Be very careful not to quarrel, however, thereby giving them an opportunity to slander and grieve you by their diatribe. Their national conversion will not occur in our day, but it will indeed come to pass. At His time the Lord will cause it to come to pass suddenly. May the Lord be gracious to His people of old. Oh, that the Redeemer would come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob! Israel would then rejoice and the Gentiles would glory, and together they would render the Lord honor, glory, and thanksgiving. *Hallelujah!*

Thus far we have considered the state of the church and God's dealings with her from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Sinai, from Sinai to Christ, and from Christ until the Revelation of John. It now remains for us to consider the state of the church, and God's dealings with her, from the Revelation of John until the end of the world, as recorded for us in the Revelation of John.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> à Brakel's exposition of the book of Revelation is not included in this four-volume set due to its controversial nature. However, out of respect for à Brakel and for the sake of historicity, it has been decided to publish this exposition as a separate volume at a future date.

Indexes



## Subject Index

*Editor's Note:* As a foundation for this index, we used the index found in the Dutch edition upon which this translation is based (Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst*, derde druk [Rotterdam, The Netherlands: D. Bolle, n.d.]). However, the following enhancements were made:

(1) The individual indexes found in each of the original three volumes were consolidated into one index.

(2) The entire index was re-alphabetized and all double and superfluous entries were eliminated.

(3) Numerous entries were clarified by rewording them to match the English text and sub-headings.

(4) Numerous new entries and cross-references were added.

Thus, while this index encompasses the substance of the indexes found in the original, it is considerably more comprehensive.

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*Editor's Note:* This index is not an exhaustive listing of all the text references found in these volumes. Instead, we opted to use the textual index found in the original Dutch text. This index consists of all those texts and passages that are either defended or expounded by à Brakel—and will thus be of benefit to those who are researching any of the texts listed below.

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