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In This Issue

A large portion of this issue is taken up with translations of a work by the Rev. Henry Danhof and of a work co-authored by Danhof and the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. These men, along with the Rev. George M. Ophoff, were put out of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 on account of their denial of the error of common grace as expressed in the "three points" of the synod of 1924. Danhof was minister of the First Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Hoeksema was minister of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, and Ophoff of the Hope Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan. These men became the founding pastors of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. It should be noted that soon after the Protestant Reformed Churches were established, Danhof and his congregation left the denomination, and remained independent unto the 1940s, at which time they reunited with the Christian Reformed Church.

Two things are noteworthy concerning these translations. Both are, in capsule form, expressions of the Reformed truth of Scripture as summed in the Reformed confessions and as taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches. And the reader will note how Danhof and Hoeksema were decidedly *theocentric* in their method of developing theological concepts. Wrote they, "We always run into the great danger that we argue from something in man to what is also in God. That is the reverse order. We must work theologically. God Himself determines the character of His will, His grace, love, hate, wrath, etc." (p. 27). Indeed they began, continued, and ended with God! Let us in our preaching, teaching, and writing follow their worthy example!

For these excellent translations we are indebted to Prof. David Engelsma (Danhof's work) and Rev. Cornelius Hanks (*Concerning Sin and Grace*).

Mark Shand, a practicing attorney in Australia before becoming a student in our seminary, contributes a well-written and documented article on John Davenant. Mr. Shand is preparing for ministry in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. Undersigned continues his series on cross-cultural missions.

Robert D. Decker

Affluence: A Western Missionary Problem (2)

Robert D. Decker

Continuing our discussion of Jonathan Bonk's book, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*,¹ we note that Bonk next treats what he calls the "relational costs of missionary affluence." Bonk uses the term relational " ... in a strictly non-technical sense to refer to both social and psychological aspects of missionary cross-cultural relationships."²

Missionary affluence affects interpersonal relationships in six ways. Wealth *insulates* the missionaries. Wealth, Bonk argues, provides the non-conducting material which protects the missionaries from the "heat and sound" of the poverty all around them.³ Wealth provides the missionaries with comfortable, well-furnished houses, plenty of nutritious food, insurance policies, nice vacations and furloughs, access to expensive air travel, education for their children, personal automobiles, and more. This kind of life style cannot be hidden from the missionaries' neighbors. The nationals cannot begin to afford these amenities. They live in an entirely different and often poverty-stricken world.

A second way in which missionary affluence affects interpersonal relationships is by *isolating* the missionaries. Personal independence in distinction from interpersonal dependence is highly valued in North

¹. This book was published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York in 1991. Hereafter we will refer to this work by the author's name.

². Bonk, endnote 1, p. 144.

³. Bonk, p. 46.

America. By "independence" Bonk means free from the control of others. Thus in North America people place a high priority on owning one's own home, his own automobile, etc. North Americans want privacy and independence. Perhaps unwittingly the missionaries take this independent way of life with them to the mission field. The result is *de facto* segregation. And segregation means separate facilities for the missionaries within the same society and culture as the nationals. Thus mission stations or compounds are established. In addition to being very costly to establish and maintain, these separate facilities result in missionary *isolation*. The missionaries do not live with the nationals among whom they work, but in the compounds. The missionaries are doing mission work in behalf of, but not with, the nationals.

Bonk sharply illustrates the problem when he writes,

Details of a report by two of my students who recently visited one of the largest mission stations in Africa sadly confirm that "the tendency for missionaries to withhold themselves from participation in local community life" is by no means a mere vestige of the past. They could not help but notice that the missionaries on the station were virtually isolated from their closest African neighbors. Any African venturing onto the station were menials or merchants, tending gardens, doing wash, delivering loads of wood. It was a world apart—a world of privileged, indulged missionary children enjoying the best education that money can buy in that country; a world of happy, fulfilled, industrious, supremely secure white missionaries, spending their lives in medical, educational, and developmental programmes on behalf of—though not with—Africans; a world of white families, each with its glowing future; a world viewed by its closest neighbors with bitterness, envy, resentment, and sometimes naked hostility. Since Biblical faith is above all a relational faith it is not only sad, but sinful, when personal possessions and privileges prevent, distort, or destroy missionary relationships with the poor. But this is almost the inevitable price of affluence.⁴

Thirdly, missionary affluence creates an unbridgeable *social gulf* between the missionaries and the nationals. For example, missionaries live in Western style bungalows, while nationals live in shacks. Missionaries educate their children, have modern transportation, have

⁴ Bonk, p. 48.

plenty of money, take vacations, etc. The nationals have none of these. The result of this is an almost total lack of fraternal relations, genuine friendship, and fellowship between the missionaries and the nationals. This is what Bonk means by an unbridgeable social gulf.

Missionaries associate with the poor only in the context of their mission work. They are among the nationals at worship, in personal evangelism, in catechism and Sunday School classes, and when dispensing benevolent care, but missionaries do not associate with the nationals socially and informally. As Bonk puts it, "It is difficult to deny that economic disparity, and not simply cultural difference, poses a great obstacle to fraternal social reciprocity."⁵ The point is, the missionaries may have a thorough understanding of the culture of the country in which they are preaching the gospel, but if they do not live with the nationals, or are unable to socialize with them, their work will be largely ineffective. To illustrate his point, Bonk quotes a couple of excerpts of a famous address given by a certain Bishop Azariah to the 1910 Edinburgh Conference on missions. Azariah lamented, "Missionaries, except for a few of the very best, seem to me to fail very largely in getting rid of an air of patronage and condescension, and in establishing a genuinely brotherly and happy relation as between equals with their Indian flocks." Azariah concluded his address with this stirring challenge, "You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. GIVE US FRIENDS."⁶ Bonk's conclusion, bluntly put, is this, missionaries must either get rid of their wealth or identify with the privileged few.

A fourth way in which missionary affluence affects interpersonal relationships is that it inevitably produces feelings of *superiority*, superior intelligence and power. Whether this is intentional or non-intentional, and with missionaries it is usually the latter, the fact remains that wealth produces feelings of superiority. This works two ways. The missionaries feel superior, and the nationals regard the missionaries as superior to them. One hundred years ago this was overtly expressed by Westerners, and their treatment of the "savages" of the 2/3 world was harsh. Sir Francis Galton, explorer and president

⁵. Bonk, p. 49.

⁶. Bonk, p. 49.

of the Royal Geographic Society, advised Europeans to look upon mischievous African savages "as you would a kicking mule or a wild animal whose nature it is to be unruly and vicious, and keep your temper quite unruffled."⁷ And Henry Drummond, of the Student Christian Movement in the late 19th century, in a "scientific examination" of that part of Africa where British Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries were active observed that it "is a wonderful thing to look at this weird world of human beings—half animal and half children, wholly savage and wholly heathen."⁸ Drummond boasted of making an African chief happy for life by giving him a red tennis cap and a few buttons.

Contemporary missionaries would never be this brash, but there is no avoiding secret feelings of superiority and the deference nationals show to missionaries just by virtue of their (the missionaries) being Western and white. Malcolm Muggeridge illustrates the point with this account of his experiences while he was a teacher in India,

I was made conscious of my status as a Sahib. It was like suddenly inheriting a peerage and being addressed as My Lord. Just by virtue of being English and white, if you went to buy a ticket at a railway station, people made way for you. Similarly, in a shop. It was very insidious. At first I found it embarrassing and distasteful; then, though I continued to ridicule it, I came to count upon receiving special treatment. Finally, when for some reason it was not accorded, there was an impulse to become sulky and irritated. From that it is but a small step to shouting and insisting, as in the days of the Raj, I saw happen often enough. Our position in India as a ruling race corrupted all concerned; soldiers . . . missionaries, government officials, planters, businessmen, wives and children; everyone. It also corrupted the Indians.⁹

Bonk observes that it is difficult to behave like a servant of the poor (and that's the missionary's calling, cf. Matt. 20:24-28) when you are rich and powerful and they are poverty stricken and weak.

Fifthly, affluence creates relationships of suspicion and *mistrust*.

⁷. Quoted by Bonk, p. 50.

⁸. Quoted by Bonk, p. 51.

⁹. Quoted by Bonk, p. 51.

The missionaries are accused of doing good only in order to do well socially and economically. The missionaries, on the other hand, accuse the nationals who aspire to the Western standard of living of being greedy and worldly-minded.

In addition to this problem there is great economic disparity between the missionaries and their national co-laborers which often results in social disparity between the two groups as well. While we may not judge motive, the question persists: do missionaries seek that office and work in order to do well?

Finally, affluence can even result in *hostile* relationships. With affluence comes social advantage. And with social advantage comes personal security and power. Bonk means power in three senses: 1) power over those with less of the things of this earth, 2) power over one's own destiny (within the sphere of God's will, obviously), and 3) power of choice.

It is Bonk's contention, and he is right about this, that the Western church must grapple with this problem of affluence or disappear as a Christian force in the world. Scripture calls missionaries not only to preach the gospel, but to be examples to the people of God of the Christian life and pilgrimage (cf. Phil. 3:17-21, I Pet. 5:1-4). The sad fact is that in the majority of instances the missionaries' affluence makes this impossible.

Bonk next discusses the "Communicatory and Strategic Consequences of Missionary Affluence."¹⁰ The essence of missions is *communication*, both verbal (preaching publicly and from house to house) and non-verbal (the godly example of the Christian life). The heart of the missionaries' *modus vivendi* is the preaching of the gospel with a view to the gathering and baptizing of the elect in Christ out of every nation, tribe, and tongue (Matt. 28:19-20; II Cor. 5:11-21; Rev. 5:9, 7:9). Ironically, the expensive life style and the technological means used by the missionaries to facilitate the accomplishment of their communicatory mandate ensure frequently that neither the missionary nor the message will be understood. Medium and message, words and deeds, theory and practice, faith and works cannot be separated in the life of the Christian. The gospel is more than a set of propositions about

¹⁰. Bonk, pp. 59-76.

God, Christ, the church, etc. Those with genuine faith have been converted from an unbelieving life of spiritual ignorance of God in Jesus Christ and a disobedient life style. Missionaries must practice a faith which can be understood and imitated. Because of their affluence, Bonk argues, the missionaries' life can be imitated only by those whose means make such a life style a realistic possibility.

Missionary affluence has certain negative effects on the preaching of the gospel. Wealthy missionaries cannot identify with the life situations of the poor whom their message is intended to address. How, asks Bonk, can "needless" missionaries identify with the "needy" poor and *vice versa*? In such situations, Bonk argues, missionaries can only model prosperous inversions of the Incarnation depicted in Hebrews 4:15. The medium and the message cannot be separated. For this reason it is impossible to have a gospel in context when the missionary himself is out of context! Not only *what* is said is important, but also *how* it is said and *by whom* it is said. It is crucial to consider communicatory elements from the perspective of the person to whom a message is directed. Hence, Bonk concludes, not communication theory, but communicator living is the key to incarnational communication. Is not this, Bonk asks, what Paul meant by "being all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:18-23)?¹¹

To those among whom they are working, there does not seem to be a correspondence between what wealthy missionaries preach and what they practice. New converts learn the ways of Christ by imitating mature Christians like the missionaries (I Cor. 4:16; I Thess. 1:6-7). But the missionaries' life style can be imitated only by those who can afford it. For example, a missionary couple may rent what by Western standards would be considered a very modest apartment in India for an amount per month which is more than the wages of twenty Indians! So much for "living alongside, living as partners."

The result of this is that the poor among whom missionaries work become jealous, envious, and in some instances bitter enemies of the missionaries whom they consider to be filthy rich tycoons.¹²

The "gospel of plenty" so eloquently and persuasively preached in

¹¹. Bonk, pp. 61-64.

¹². Bonk, pp. 64-66.

the silent language of the missionaries' life style frequently overrides or distorts poorer people's understanding of the Christian gospel. Preaching hunger and thirst after righteousness with their lips and the gospel of abundance with their lives produces "rice Christians." Missionaries conclude, "they only want what we have: money, cars, education for their children, etc." Clinging to their personal affluence makes missionary identification with the poor impossible. The implications of affluence upon missionary communication are obvious. There is often a great difference between what the Western missionaries think they are communicating and what their poor listeners actually see, hear, understand, and believe.¹³

Bonk continues by discussing what he calls the "strategic costs" of missionary affluence. Bonk defines strategy as "the art or science of planning and conducting Christian mission." This (strategy) is missiology.¹⁴ Western missionary strategy is characterized by dependence upon expensive technology. Without boats, planes, automobiles, four-wheel drive vehicles, motorcycles, computers, radios, TV's, refrigerators, electricity, air-conditioning, and more, mission work apparently cannot be done. Such devices accentuate the distance between missionaries and nationals, thus reinforcing the *isolation* which is a natural part of "technological living." In addition, the management of technology is time consuming, and this means there is less time to be spent preaching the gospel.

Affluence/dependent strategies cannot and should not be imitated by the nationals whom the Western missionaries are trying to teach. Western missiologists reserve the term "missionary" for those with sufficient money to do mission work in the Western mode. The uneducated, poorly paid national workers are called "native evangelists." The first priority of missionaries in many instances, according to Bonk, is the avoidance of inconvenience and personal suffering. Did the apostle Paul have this as his priority (cf. II Cor. 6:4-10; 11:24-30)? What kind of model is this for the poor nationals? How does this affect our goal of organizing indigenous churches, which by definition are "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating"?

¹³. Bonk, pp. 66-70.

¹⁴. Bonk, p. 70.

Genuinely fraternal strategies in conjunction with poorer churches are usually frustrating and often unworkable from the point of view of both the sending churches and the foreign churches. Money gives power, and power results in domination. True partnership between unequals (i.e., the missionaries and the nationals) is impossible. The slogan of the Whitby Conference of the International Missionary Society in 1947 was "Partnership in Missions." The reaction to this from an Indonesian Church leader expressed to the Dutch delegation was, "Partnership in Obedience, yes; the partnership for you, the obedience for us."¹⁵ Ghandi warned American missionaries to India in 1936, "if you dangle your millions before us, you will make beggars of us and demoralize us."¹⁶ Affluence creates the persistent tensions between the Western missions and the 2/3 world churches.

Western affluence results in strategies which cannot effectively reach the poor. Western mission efforts have largely neglected and missed the greatest migration in history: the migration of 2/3 world rural peasants to the great, mega cities. Because affluence makes us uncomfortable in the context of insoluble poverty, we have focused on the upwardly mobile elements of the mega cities' populations. We fail to see, Bonk charges, the fat but lean of soul Western world as a desperately needy mission field! The Western church generally speaking is "awash with God talk and strategy, but desperately poor spiritually." Compare the churches of Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11) and Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) with the church at Laodacia (Rev. 3:13-22)!¹⁷

Bonk next offers what he calls "theological, ethical, and biblical considerations on missionary affluence."¹⁸ Scripture teaches that material possessions are not wrong in themselves. Our material possessions are God's good gifts to us and must be used in His service, i.e., for the church and kingdom of God.¹⁹ Our calling, therefore, is not to seek

¹⁵. Bonk, p. 73.

¹⁶. Bonk, p. 73.

¹⁷. Bonk, pp. 74-76.

¹⁸. Bonk, pp. 77-107.

¹⁹. Cf. Matt. 6:25-34; 19:16-26; *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 38.

(set our hearts on) earthly possessions. Rather, we must avoid all covetousness and be content with what God is pleased to give us.²⁰

Scripture also teaches that God as the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth is the sole *owner* of everything. We own nothing! There is nothing of which we can say, "This is mine." It is all God's!²¹ This means we must be good and faithful *stewards* of the Lord's gifts to us. They are His goods. Faithful stewardship involves caring for the poor and supporting the ministry of the gospel.²²

Jesus Himself is the great model for us in this calling to be good stewards. Jesus became poor for our sakes that we might become rich. He emptied Himself in order to redeem us. Jesus had not where to lay His head. Can we, who are called to preach the gospel to the nations, do less?!

Bonk concludes this significant work by calling the church and her missionaries to "grapple with affluence."²³ We need to begin this "grappling" by reminding ourselves of the theological moorings out of which missions must proceed. The first of these is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus must be the example for missionaries, and Jesus repeatedly and consistently rejected wealth and demonstrations of power.²⁴ Jesus' example does not leave much room for the affluence to which missionaries from the Western churches have become accustomed.

The second theological mooring out of which missions must proceed is the cross of Jesus. The cross of Christ is our salvation from sin and death, but it also guarantees suffering for Jesus' sake. Those for whom Jesus died and who follow Him look forward, with a hope that will never make them ashamed, to the glory of fellowship with God in Christ in heaven. But the way to that glory is a way of suffering for

²⁰ Cf. I Tim. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:10-13; Heb. 13:5-6; *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 44.

²¹ Cf. Ps. 24:1-2.

²² Eph. 4:28.

²³ Bonk, pp. 111-132.

²⁴ Cf. John 17:16-17; Phil. 2:5; Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 8:31-33.

Jesus' sake. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes this truth.²⁵ Nothing in Scripture speaks of "comfortable support packages" which insure no needless suffering, but a comfortable life abroad. If this be true for Christians in general, how more ought it be true for missionaries?

The third theological mooring out of which missions must proceed Bonk calls weakness. This is the opposite of power. Western people are privileged. Privilege requires protection. Protection requires power. But, God chooses the weak of this world to accomplish His purpose. Jesus is the supreme example of this. Jesus' servant, the apostle Paul, the great missionary to the Gentiles, is also an example of this weakness.²⁶ It ought to be obvious from his inspired writings that the apostle Paul is no precedent for the affluence, efficiency, and comfort modeled by many of the Western missionaries.

Bonk argues that missions as incarnational, in the way of the cross and in weakness, implies repentance on our part. He warns, however, that there will be obstacles to repentance encountered on two levels. There will be obstacles to repentance on the *institutional* level. What we need to do, Bonk contends, is to get more Nationals involved in the actual work, as pastors, elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers. And we need to stress *interdependence* and *cooperation* between the Western (sending) church and the non-Western (receiving) church. If we are able, by God's grace, to accomplish this interdependence and cooperation as *equals*, we will reach our goal of establishing truly indigenous churches, i.e., churches which are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. There will also be obstacles to repentance on the *family* and *personal* levels. Missionaries need to be willing to pursue economic austerity. They must live among and *at the level* of the nationals among whom they preach the gospel. To do this, missionaries must be willing to be considered non-conformists and eccentric. At both of these levels, the tendency to self-justification and fierce, hostile resistance to change will be very strong indeed!

At the individual level this calls for self-denial, but not self-righteousness (pride), a simpler life style, and good stewardship. *Needs*

²⁵. Cf. Matt. 10:28; Mark 8:31-34; I Cor. 1:17-18; II Cor. 11:23-33; Phil. 3:17-20; II Tim. 3:10-12.

²⁶. Cf. I Corinthians 1:27; 2:1ff.; 4:8-13.

must be defined not by Western standards, but by local conditions. In the last analysis, needs are determined by the Lord.

At the family level, Bonk asserts, this calls for eliminating schools for MKs ("missionary kids"), which Bonk describes as "conspicuous enclaves of Western culture and privilege which insulate and isolate the children."²⁷ Missionaries and their families must be willing to live with the nationals, which means: no mission compounds and no nice houses for missionaries. Admittedly, Bonk grants, to do this is going to be exceedingly tough.²⁸ But it can be done by the grace of God.

At the institutional level the church must be willing to provide encouragement, understanding, and *acceptance* to missionaries who are willing to lower their standard of living. Change at this level, Bonk predicts, will come very slowly indeed.

For the missionaries, their families, and their staffs change means they will have to choose poverty or parity with the nationals, rather than wealth as a basis for missionary service. It will require, on the missionaries' part, austerity, simplicity, and self-denial. A thorough knowledge of the culture of the host country and its cooperation will be needed in effecting this kind of change. But, Bonk asks, "will not God bless such efforts? Is not God's wonderful grace in Jesus Christ sufficient for this?"

The seminaries and the churches they serve must teach these things to their students—to all of their students, not just to those who aspire to be missionaries in a foreign culture. And all of the students, ministers, officebearers, and professors must be examples for God's people of a simpler, more austere life style! ●

²⁷. Bonk, pp. 126-127. This is an interesting point indeed! One that will provoke a good bit of discussion and, no doubt, controversy as well.

²⁸. The reader must not lose sight of the fact that Bonk is himself the son of a foreign missionary.

The Idea of the Covenant of Grace

by
Rev. H. Danhof

Translated by David J. Engelsma

Chapter 3

Translator's note: The preceding chapter was Danhof's account of the history of the doctrine of the covenant, especially in the Reformed tradition (Protestant Reformed Theological Journal 31, no. 1, November, 1997: 10-19). In this section of his booklet, Danhof sets forth his understanding of the doctrine of the covenant. Noteworthy is his derivation of the covenant from the triune being of God. All footnotes again are mine.

The covenant rests in the Holy Trinity. God is the God of the covenant. He is such, not only according to the counsel of His will in His relation to the creature, but first of all in Himself, according to His own nature. The divine life in itself is a covenant of friendship among Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That divine love-life is then the basis for every covenant relation between Creator and creature and between the creatures mutually. The absolute covenant conception is hidden in the family life of the Holy Trinity.

No one, therefore, will ever succeed in fathoming the covenant-idea in all its depth. Still one can see fairly easily that all relation, reciprocal action, and mutual fellowship among Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must necessarily be, happen, and take place according to the nature of the covenant. For God is one in being, but in persons, three. The three persons are all equally possessors of the same divine essence. In their personal substance, they are equal with each other. But in their individual, personal properties, they differ from each other. Their oneness of essence gives harmony. The identical substance of the

persons implies agreement. At the same time, in the difference of their individual, personal properties is found the possibility for the highest fellowship and cooperation. The oneness and difference of the persons give eternal, divine harmony. And the love-life of God, welling up out of the unfathomable depths of the essence, and decreed by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, pours itself forth in the multiplicity of the forms of the individual, personal properties, manifesting in the most glorious hue the full riches of the eternal friendship of the Trinity.

In all the outgoing works of God, something of this covenant of friendship is necessarily revealed outside of God. For even though these outgoing works are free and decreed, they are, nevertheless, works of a self-revealing God. Because the absolute covenant-idea is grounded in God's own nature and manner of life, all revelation must necessarily be revelation of the God of the covenant, since it can be nothing other than self-revelation of the Trinity. And although we may not suppose that God exhausts Himself in His self-revelation, still we shall certainly have to assume that an impression of the absolute covenant-idea in the Trinity is found in the highest creature, since God created man according to His image.

In my opinion, this covenant-idea in man is not wholly identical with the religious idea. Yet, as man was created according to God's image immediately at creation and by virtue of this could attain at once to active religious fellowship with His Creator, thus his religion finds its goal in the fellowship of the covenant. Through the band of the covenant, God lets His own absolute covenant life continue to vibrate in the creature, and by the vibrating of that band man echoes the life of God in his life.¹ In his most sublime fellowship with the Eternal One, man is friend of God. The covenant causes God and man to dwell together as friends. In this, the covenant-conception is realized fully. Accordingly, in his wonderful vision of the kingdom of glory John saw the tabernacle of God with men.

Man is friend of God. God Himself has conceived him so. That is His will concerning him. Toward the fellowship of friendship with

¹ Danhof's figure is unusual and vivid. The covenant between the triune God and (elect) man is a kind of spiritual string, as of a musical instrument. Along it God's own covenant life vibrates (Dutch: "*natrillen*") in man. God "plucks" the string so that His own life may echo in man.

God, he has been directed. In this he finds his destiny. He can truly rest only in the fellowship of friendship with his God. To be sure, as a moral-rational being he can turn into his very opposite and by this become a covenant companion and friend of Satan. But even then, in his formal, covenantal life he still shows his origin, nature, and original destiny. The damned in hell is the complete opposite of the man of God in the kingdom of glory. In the man of God in the kingdom of glory, God's covenant-conception has been fully realized in a positive sense. According to the measure of his comprehension, the life of the friendship of the Trinity continues to vibrate in him. The God of friendship is known, enjoyed, mirrored, and reflected by him. With his whole heart, with his whole soul, with his whole mind, and with all his powers, he responds to the act of friendship on the part of the Eternal that penetrates, qualifies, arouses, and provokes him. God's friend is of God, through God, and to God.

In the covenant God finds the most excellent form for the revelation and bestowal of His friendship. The covenant of friendship exalts the reciprocal relationship of life and fellowship between God and man to the highest order and greatest intimacy. In no other relation than that of friend of God would man ever be able in a more perfect way to show forth the praises of Him who called him out of darkness into His marvelous light.

God then has also undoubtedly willed the covenant first of all for His own sake. It serves Him in His highest self-revelation and self-glorification. Since He reveals and glorifies Himself by it as the God of love and friendship and by it exalts man as His own covenant companion and friend, therefore, in my judgment, this divine, sovereign will loses all the apparent lack of feeling and coldness that, according to the impression of some critics, adheres to the sovereignty of God (as that is understood by the Reformed faith), in contrast to the love of God. We may not say, with James Orr (*Progress of Dogma*, Lect. IX, p. 292), that Calvin "errs in placing his root-idea of God in sovereign will rather than in love. Love is subordinated to sovereignty, instead of sovereignty to love." For with Calvin we must very really explain the entire creation from a free act of the will of God. Also the covenant, therefore, although grounded in God's own nature, is no less a fruit of His will. Strictly speaking, the one presupposes the other. Nevertheless, this sovereign will of the God of the covenant is a willing to reveal and

glorify the life of the friendship of the triune God. It is, therefore, entirely encircled in the glow of love.²

This will of God includes also the forms of the covenant and, further, all means and ways for the complete realizing of the covenant-conception. Also the forms of the covenant are of God. The covenant of works was not replaced by the covenant of grace, but according to God's ordinance the covenant of God changed from the form of the covenant of works into that of the covenant of grace.³ For God's sake! It was He, first of all, who willed the deeper way through the fall and rising again of man for the most perfect development of His covenant-conception. His purpose was that the life of the friendship of the Trinity would shine the more gloriously. From the counsel of peace—the agreement⁴ among the three persons in the divine being for the redemption of man (*Korte Schets der Geref. Dogmatiek*, pp. 45, 46, by Prof. Ten Hoor)—radiates to us, first of all, God's own love-life. And exactly

² This is a remarkable insight. Obviously, Danhof is rejecting the charge that the sovereignty of God as conceived by the Reformed faith is cold and unfeeling. His defense, however, is that the sovereign decree (of creation and redemption) is centrally the decree of the covenant, which is essentially warm, intimate friendship between God and His people. Apart from this, Danhof suggests, sovereignty might well be cold and unfeeling. The covenant "saves" the sovereignty of God from the charge of such as James Orr. Is it perhaps the case today that Reformed people fail to proclaim and defend the sovereignty of God in predestination and providence, indeed *cannot* proclaim and defend the sovereignty of God, exactly because they do not see the sovereignty of God as freely ordaining and realizing the covenant of grace as fellowship with God. They do not conceive the divine sovereignty as "entirely encircled in the glow of love" (Dutch: "*geheel gehuld in den gloed der liefde*").

³ Here is a different view of the relation between the covenant with Adam in Paradise and the covenant of grace with Christ and the elect church after the fall from the view which has been traditional with many Reformed theologians. The covenant with Adam was not a completely different covenant from the covenant of grace. Rather, it was a form of God's one covenant with man. Clearly implied is the sovereignty of God in the fall of Adam governing also this aspect of history in the interests of His covenant. At the time of the writing of this booklet—1920—Danhof still accepted the traditional *name* of the covenant with Adam, although he differed radically with the tradition as

therein seems to be found the explanation for God's will in this. And, further, in this then rests also God's covenant of grace with man in Christ. That covenant cannot fail, since it is grounded in the agreement of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which in turn roots in the very love-life of God and has as its purpose the revelation and glorifying of the same.

From this viewpoint, Christ and the Holy Ghost must also be explained from the will of the God of the covenant. The same holds for the regeneration, faith, struggle, and victory of the people of God. And even though, ultimately, the will of God in reprobation is somewhat different from what it is in election, nevertheless He wills reprobation no less than election. God realizes His covenant-conception according to His eternal counsel of election and reprobation.

Chapter 4

Translator's note: The subject of this section is the organic development of the covenant in history as part—the central part—of the organic development of all things. The importance of this aspect of the truth of the covenant is, first, that it repudiates the teaching that posits a positive

to the *nature* of this covenant. Later, Herman Hoeksema would reject the name as well.

⁴ The reference is to the source of the covenant of grace in God Himself, what in Reformed theology has been called "the covenant of redemption." Mistakenly regarding Zechariah 9:13 as biblical basis for the origin of the covenant in God, Reformed theologians also spoke of the "counsel of peace." Traditionally, this was presented as an agreement either between the Father and the Son or between all three persons of the Trinity. Danhof still accepted the tradition's view of the source of the covenant as an "*agreement*." Herman Hoeksema would radically rework the doctrine of the source of the covenant. The covenant of grace has its origin in God, but this origin is the decree of the triune God appointing Jesus Christ as head and mediator of the covenant, in whom God will establish His covenant with the elect church. Hoeksema called this eternal source of the covenant—this reworked "covenant of redemption"—the "decree of the covenant" (see his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Grand Rapids: RFPA, 1966, pp. 285-336).

development of the ungodly world alongside the church by virtue of "common grace"; second, that it establishes the reality of a (spiritual) antithesis between the covenant friends of God and the enemies of God, who live in closest physical proximity; and, third, that it wards off all anabaptistic world-flight.

Especially the organic connection of our race must also be involved in that will of God. All the connections of head and members, of parents and children, and of church and world are God's means for the realizing of His covenant. That realization of the covenant everywhere follows the organic lines: in the individual and in the generations, positively in the church and negatively in the world. God created man as an organic creature and in organic relation to the world around him. For this reason, he lives organically. And, therefore, humanity reaches its completion in and through all the different individuals of our race. And the realization of the covenant-conception keeps pace with the progression of the organic development of the life of our race.

We must emphasize this strongly. Adam was not merely the moral representative of all human persons so that the guilt of his first sin is imputed to them. In Adam we find also the principle of humanity: our organic head. Therefore, as human persons, we are not only born with guilt and subject to condemnation. But, according to Psalm 51:7, all human individuals are conceived and born in unrighteousness and in sin. The result of the latter is that all human individuals actually sin and bring the sin of our race to development according to their participation in the root-sin of their organic head. Our daily sins cannot be explained from inherited corruption, as is commonly done, since corruption and actual sin are wholly dissimilar ideas. But daily sins spring up in the individual children of men from the root-sin of our race on account of their organic connection with the head of the race, Adam.

Our race then is not to be compared to a tree of which the trunk is preserved and the branches go lost, as if God would save a damaged humanity. Rather, it is to be compared to a forest that has sprung from one tree. The individual trees of such a forest are then not only independent trees, but also individuals which in different ways continue and develop the life of the tree from which they all sprouted. If then the life in the root of that tree from which all the other trees sprouted is wild, so will it be also in all the trees of the forest, since each individual tree

will bring out a particular aspect of the wildness of the parent-tree. In this way, the wild life of the forest comes to full development. And then you can afterwards also introduce new life by inoculation in such a manner that the forest is transformed, although very many trees that remain wild must be condemned to the fire.

This figure now is applicable to our race. Humanity is an organism. The different members of it are both independent persons who share in Adam's guilt and individuals differing from each other in thousands of ways, who have organic communion in the root-sin of the head of their race, Adam. With reference to this latter truth, the sin of our race bears an organic character. The same holds, as a result, also for our life in sin; for the operation of curse, death, and perdition; for the temptation of the devil and the inspiration of the Spirit; for the life of grace and spiritual development, etc. With the development of the various connections and relationships, the principles of sin and grace are unfolded and practiced by the individual children of God and children of the world agreeably to the nature of each age and according to the demand of time, place, and circumstance.

On the basis of this organic character of humanity, therefore, the manner of the operation of God in realizing His covenant-conception in the organic whole of His creatures must be further explained by us. In this connection, the mutual relation of church and world during this earthly age especially demands our attention.

We consider then the development of the covenant of our God. The beginning of the realization of the covenant-conception we find already in the earthly paradise. Already in the state of rectitude, the relation between God and man was that of friendship. According to Genesis 2:15, the Lord God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden, in order to cultivate it and to guard it. Those words unfold to us the conception of the covenant of works. Adam is servant, covenant companion, and friend of God. What he does in that relation yields results for all that is included in him. But his task is the practice of God's covenant.⁵ He must cultivate and guard the garden of Eden in the service of the Lord. He represents the cause of God, also in opposition

⁵. "*zijne taak is de betrachting van Gods verbond.*" Danhof's thought is that Adam's work in Paradise was his active carrying out of his part in the covenant; it was covenantal work.

to the devil. Especially in opposition to Satan, man must reveal himself as God's friend. However, in keeping with the nature of friendship this may not be coerced, but must be a matter of free choice. In this way the relation of friendship between God and man, which as yet was not fixed, would have been unchangeably established. The probationary command of verses 16 and 17 presented man with the opportunity for this. The probationary command did not promise life to man, but threatened God's servant and covenant companion with death. It put his friendship with the Lord to the test. Such appears plainly from the wording of the probationary command as such, as well as from Satan's words to the woman; from Eve's evaluation of the tree; from God's judgment upon the serpent; and from the result of the sin of man (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:4, 5, 6, 15, 22). And God's friend failed the test. Under the influence of the temptation, he treacherously defected to the enemy, as far as he was concerned. In the heart of man, in the choice of his will, the covenant of friendship between God and him was broken.

However, it now became evident that the covenant was God's. Man could break it in his own will, that is, by a free choice refuse to will it. But this did not nullify the covenant. God is greater than our heart. His cause is not dependent on man's choice. On the contrary, the choice of man is dependent upon God's will. And God wills the covenant. Therefore, according to God's good pleasure, behind Adam when he fell away stood Christ, God's Companion, and in Him the Lord's covenant of friendship with man was firm. Out of grace in Christ, God realizes His covenant of friendship with man, contrary to his sinful will and unto his sanctified will, so that man becomes God's covenant companion and friend eternally.

Behold, the idea of the covenant of grace!

According to God's counsel, all things work together for the realization of this idea of the covenant of grace. For a time, the earth bears the burden of the curse of the Lord, and for a while the creation resigns itself to the bondage of corruption. The angels, as ministering spirits, go out from before the presence of God on behalf of those who shall inherit salvation. And the world which perishes serves the church which is saved as chaff serves the grain. It bears the grain and causes it to ripen for the heavenly granary, namely, the communion of friendship. At the same time it itself is being prepared by the grain for the fire that is not quenched.

Meanwhile the devil, having no light of himself, nor being capable of producing a single independent thought concerning the kingdom that he supposes himself to be establishing through man, is, in all his rampaging, dependent upon the light that God causes to shine forth from the people of His choice. Therefore, with his kingdom of darkness, he only serves the reality of God's covenant and the loveliness of the heritage of His friends, although against his will. He also serves to manifest ever more plainly, through all ages, indeed, unto eternity, the lying, deceitful, and abominable character both of himself and of his society.⁶

The history of all things is the development of the covenant of friendship of our God.

God realizes His covenant-conception by the power with which He acts upon the organic whole of His creatures according to His counsel of providence. Each creature, in its organic participation in the totality, receives God's preserving, cooperating, and governing power by which it attains to the perfect realization of the original creation-conception of God and, with this, its own eternal salvation, provided that it is standing in the right spiritual relation to the Creator. In the regenerated person, the spiritual relation to God is principally again restored and, therefore, good, so that he, by that internal, powerful operation of His Creator, can fulfill his calling and reach his own blessed destiny.

However, this positively good power of God works death and destruction for the unregenerated world, since it itself reverses that operation into its opposite by sin. Certainly, therefore, God does good to all creatures. He causes His sun to rise upon evil and good and causes the rain to fall upon just and unjust. It should be understood, however, that the evil do not become better by this, but even worse, and that the unrighteous do not become righteous by this, but still more godless.

According to Hebrews 6:4-8, the world of plants teaches us that. If ground and field are moistened with a gentle rain and nurtured by the sun, the good wheat soon sprouts and grows luxuriously. However (and let this be noted!), then and only then do the weeds also develop. God's good rain and sunshine cause also the thistles to grow. By means of the

⁶. "society" is *gemeenschap*, the word that with reference to the covenant means "fellowship."

positively good powers of God the thistles and thorns develop. However, apart from re-creation they do not develop into myrtles and fir trees, but into still larger thistles and thorns, in order presently to kindle a great fire. Indeed, therefore, also the unregenerated person develops by means of the good gift and power of God, but as unregenerated; according to his own nature; out of his own principle of life; and unto his own complete development in evil.

Since the regenerated and the unregenerated are inseparable and exist organically intertwined during this earthly dispensation, it must, therefore, be maintained that the whole creation develops in its organic oneness by the power which comes to it from the Creator, but from the twofold principle of sin and grace. The life of regeneration then is not supported by the life that originates from creation, and the covenant of special grace is not surrounded on all sides by a broader covenant of so-called common grace.⁷ Rather, the elect kernel of Adam's race and its reprobate husk are organically bound together during this earthly dispensation. God's grace is not common, but is directed to the kernel. As the result, there is only one organic development of the whole creation, especially of humanity, out of the principles of grace and sin, along the lines of election and reprobation, and by means of the positively good power of the Creator which comes to it according to the counsel of God's providence.

In this way, by the almighty operation of the good power of God in the kingdom of light and, with this, also in that of darkness, the creation reaches its complete development in the way of a fearful struggle and according to the demands and along the lines of the original plan of the Lord for the life of the people of the covenant. An independent development by each kingdom individually is impossible. Indeed, to limit ourselves to the world of the children of men, the children of both these kingdoms are of one blood; owe their origin, as concerns the flesh, to each other; live simultaneously and under similar circumstances; possess a similar disposition and a common kind of life; and, therefore, can only develop in mutual communion and according to the same laws of life. Their life here on earth is in all kinds of ways marvelously intermingled. They also realize their solidarity and, therefore, feel a need for cooperation toward a common goal of life.

⁷. *gemeene gratie*

The children of Adam then would desire no division in their ranks, nor permit any tearing of the bands of their communion, were it not that they differ radically in one point, namely, in their spiritual relation to God. Nevertheless, that different relation to their Creator, the Fount of their life, is the wedge which causes them, with their opposing world-and-life-views, to separate to the right and to the left in every sphere, even to the smallest details, and with compelling consequence. The result is that at the end of this earthly dispensation they, as children of the light and children of the darkness, respectively attain to the perfected kingdom of the light and that of the darkness. This they do, who, no matter how they formally resemble each other in all respects, shall form an absolute and eternal contrast as that of pole and antipole, of plus and minus, of life and death, because of their different spiritual relation to God. ●

(to be continued)

Concerning Sin and Grace

Herman C. Hanko

Although I had intended to continue my series on "Another Look at Common Grace" in this issue, I decided once more to interrupt the series with a section of a book, written by Revs. Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof, on the very subject we are treating.

A brief look at the last issues of the *Journal* in which our series appeared will remind our readers that we were talking about such aspects of common grace as the restraint of sin by an inner operation of the Holy Spirit and the consequent good which the unregenerate are capable of doing.

These doctrines were embodied officially in the three points of common grace adopted by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in June of 1924. They are essentially the view of common grace which was originally developed by Dr. Abraham Kuyper, especially in his three-volume work, *Gemeene Gratie* (Common Grace).

In 1923 Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof published a book entitled *Van Zonde en Genade* (Concerning Sin and Grace). This book is an extremely important one for several reasons. It is written in five sections: the first a historical survey of the debate over Kuyperian common grace and a demonstration of the fact that Kuyper's view is outside the view of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands; a detailed description of what Kuyper's view of common grace was, with copious quotations from *Gemeene Gratie* (Common Grace)—along with a penetrating critique of Kuyper's view; a treatment of various criticisms which were offered both in this country and in the Netherlands against the position of Hoeksema and Danhof; an eloquent statement of the position of the authors on the fundamental issues involved; and, finally, an exegetical study of the texts to which Kuyper appealed in support of his position.

From a biblical and confessional viewpoint, the book demolishes Kuyperian common grace.

A translation of the entire book has been prepared by my father,

Rev. Cornelius Hanko. Although the seminary hopes to publish the entire book at some future date in syllabus form (when the editing is finished), I reproduce here the second half of the chapter in the book in which the authors set forth their own position on the question of common grace. I am sure the readers will find it instructive, persuasive, and an eloquent presentation of the positive truth of Scripture and the confessions.

Another interesting feature of the book is the date of publication: 1923. The book was written while Rev. Hoeksema was pastor of the Eastern Avc. Christian Reformed Church and Rev. Henry Danhof was pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo. That is, the book was written about one year prior to the expulsion of both these men from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Church. This book played a major role in the controversy, made clear the authors' position on the debated subject, and became the primary reason for their expulsion. Let the reader judge whether they were guilty of heresy!

The date is interesting for another reason. Already in 1923, while still a minister in the Christian Reformed Church, Hoeksema had formulated his fundamental position on the basis of which he was to develop his entire theology in later years. It is all here, in this book: Hoeksema's view of the sovereignty and particularity of grace; his view of the "organic" conception of things; and even his basic views on the covenant of grace. It is clear from this book that Hoeksema's subsequent writings were only further expositions of his basic position taken early in his ministry.

One more comment. To comprehend what Hoeksema is saying here it is necessary to understand Kuyper's view of common grace as developed in his *Gemeene Gratie* (Common Grace). We may briefly sum it up with the following propositions.

1) God had an original purpose in the creation of Paradise I and in Adam as the king in that creation. That purpose was to see the original creation develop in this present history, under the kingship of Adam and man's calling to subdue the earth.

2) That original purpose was thwarted by Adam's sin. But the consequences of Adam's sin were so great that, all other things being equal, this present creation would have become a "hell," and Adam himself would have become an animal as consequence of the fall.

3) To prevent this from happening, God intervened in his common

grace.¹ Sin was like a poison which would have killed Adam and left the creation a barren wilderness; common grace (and the figure is Kuyper's) is a heavy dose of anti-poison which God administers so that part of the poison is vomited out of Adam's system. The result is that Adam does not die immediately, and the creation itself is preserved in something of its original form and beauty.

4) The result is that, although special grace also enters the picture through the mother promise, Adam and his generations are able to fulfill the original creation (or cultural) mandate so that there are really two streams of development in the world: one stream being that of special grace which saves a church; the other being that of the development of culture in all branches of learning, science, industry, the arts, etc.

5) But, because of common *grace*, the development of the original creation mandate is a solid and good development, pleasing in the sight of God. It is, of course, because it is outside of special grace, a development of sinful man apart from regeneration. It is the good that sinners do. It is the fruit of the restraint of sin in the ungodly. It results in many good works in the world.

6) So good are the fruits of this "original" line of development, that not only is the church, while in the world, able to make use of these fruits (the "bridge" which common grace builds whereby the world is brought into the church), but these fruits of common grace will even be preserved in the new creation when Christ returns.

Hoeksema finds in this presentation an unbiblical notion, a view that is a fundamental dualism, a serious threat to the church, and a doctrine that can only ultimately destroy the church.

But Hoeksema and Danhof are not content merely to criticize;

¹ It must be understood that Abraham Kuyper consistently used the expression *Gemeene Gratie* to describe common grace. He did this to distinguish his view from the view of many in the Dutch Reformed Churches, which view spoke of *Algemeene Genade*. This was the view of God's common attitude of favor towards all men which is especially evident in the well-meant offer of the gospel, a view which Kuyper repudiated with heart and soul.

It is impossible to distinguish in English between "*genade*" and "*gratie*"; both mean, "grace." Hence, in the article which we quote, the expression "*gemeene gratie*" has been consistently translated as "common grace," and the reader must remember that the reference is not to the common grace of the well-meant offer.

they present what, in their opinion, is biblical and confessional. A part of that section we hereby offer to our readers.

Our special thanks to Rev. Hanko, who painstakingly did the translating.

After the authors gave a detailed analysis of A. Kuyper's view of common grace, they present their own position in a chapter which has the title, "Our View." What follows is part of that chapter.

To arrive at a somewhat accurate conception of the operation of the will of God we cannot proceed exclusively from the use of the word *grace* in our usage of the term, or even its usage in the holy Scripture. We must also study definite terms and the use of words, but that must be done with great circumspection. We always run into the great danger that we argue from something in man to what is also in God. That is the reverse order. We must work theologically. God Himself determines the character of His will, His grace, love, hate, wrath, etc. But it is also true that apart from God's revelation in the Scripture we know nothing definite about God. And so we must first come to have from God's self-revelation a clearly defined image of God and the operation of His will before we say anything at all. And this must still always be in strict subservience to that same Word of His revelation in regard to the election of His grace, and the accompanying reprobation of His wrath, as the operation of His eternal will.

The word *grace* in Scripture, as also in the ancient and modern languages that come into consideration in our present study, has the meaning of: beauty, pleasantness, goodness, benevolence, favor, helpfulness, bowing down, thanks, and unrestrained guilt-forgiving love for the unworthy. This last meaning of the word for grace in Greek does not actually have that meaning outside the New Testament, but this meaning stands on the foreground especially in the epistles of Paul, and then in contrast to such concepts as: law, work, duty, reward, etc. Also in our modern languages this word sometimes has that meaning. The Latin word *gratia*, from *gratus* (gratifying), and likely related to the Greek *charis* (gladly, or favor, gracious) has approximately the same meaning. In Psalm 45, according to the metrical version, we sing in regard to Israel's king: "Supremely fair Thou art, Thy lips with grace o'erflow; His richest blessings evermore doth God on Thee bestow," having in mind the appealing appearance of this King, given by God in

His grace. And according to Ephesians 2:8 we are saved by grace, and not by our works of the law. Also the Dutch language speaks of: “a gracious figure, being in favor with some one. being king by the grace of God, an artist by the grace of God, asking favor, granting, making grace available, gratifying, gratification, etc.” In the English we also speak of grace as gratitude, as also in the Dutch we find *gaarne*, *graag*, and *begeeren*; in the German *gerne*; and in the Italian *grazia* (thank); for the Greek *charis* (grace). These various meanings of the word tell us already that “grace” is rich in content

But this is by no means sufficient to reach an accurate concept of the grace of God. Indeed, we are not dealing with the use of the word “grace,” but with grace as such, grace as it is in God. But even regardless of that, in determining the concept grace we must very definitely take note of the use that is made of the word in holy Scripture, the translations of God’s Word, the confessions, the formulas², the metrical version of the Psalms, the works of Reformed theologians, our own usage; and we must take note of many related words, such as: benevolence, mercy, compassion, patience, kindness, pity, and, even though the word is rarely used, endurance. (Compare, e.g., Hosea 2:22; Rom. 9:23, 25; I Pet. 2:10; II Pet. 3:9, 15; James 5:7, 11; Rom. 3:25; the metrical version of the Psalms: 12:1; 59:3; 67:2, 3, 5; 94:1, 2; 140:1; 212:5, 6; 216:3; 233:3; 242; 254; 265; 278³; as also our Baptism Form.) This comparative study will enable us to see that by all these words, and many others, the same concrete idea is indicated, even though it is true that each of these words, although some have interchangeable meanings, usually allows us to see the rich grace of God from a definite viewpoint and in a special relationship. To this must naturally still be added a study of all sorts of words, terms, and figures that deal with reprobation, such as: hate, wrath, anger, rage, etc. This twofold revelation of God’s will (in electing grace and reprobating wrath) must naturally be carried through in regard to their object, their historical development, and their eternally abiding result.

Even at that we are not finished. All of this must be elucidated and

². Formulas are the forms used in Reformed churches for the administration of the sacraments, the installation of officebearers, etc.

³. The references are to the 1912 edition of *The Psalter*.

interpreted in connection with God's counsel and eternal purpose. We are dealing here with that which God wills. That will cannot be explained from something apart from God Himself. The main reason for God's will must be sought in God Himself. God's will does reveal itself in connection with man's sin, but that sin did not take God by surprise, did not occur in creation apart from His counsel and will. Thus we are confronted with the study of God's will of electing grace and reprobating wrath as works which, in the end, must be ascribed to God. God's grace and disfavor are not determined by one or another attribute in God, but by God Himself; if we may express ourselves in that manner, by all the fullness of God. We must even diligently guard ourselves against separating the attributes of God. God's attributes are in a certain sense to be distinguished, but are not essentially different, neither mutually nor collectively, from the essence of God.

We are dealing with God Himself. God's grace and disfavor, His love and His hatred, His election and reprobation are His, they are God's. For His will He takes reasons out of Himself. This is true, whether we understand it or not, whether we will it or not.

The Reformed usually designate *God's glory* as the purpose of this will. Formerly we have sought to define this more accurately by speaking of covenant fellowship, or friendship. The concept *God's glory* is very abstract and has no content for our thinking. This becomes somewhat different when we consider that God is the fully blessed One in Himself. He is fully blessed as One who lives His life of love as the triune covenant God. God is the God of the covenant. He is that not only according to the counsel of His will in relation to the creature, but first of all in Himself, by virtue of His nature. The indigenous life of God is a covenant of friendship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Indeed, God is one in essence, three in persons. The three persons all participate alike in the same divine essence. In their individual independency they are alike, but in their individual, personal attributes they are different. Their oneness of essence gives them harmony, the equality of persons requires agreement, while the possibility for most intimate fellowship and cooperation is given in the diversity of their individual personal attributes. The oneness and the diversity give harmony. The love-life of God, welling up from the unsearchable depths of His being, desired by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and pouring forth from the manifold forms of their individual attributes,

reveals in a glorious, variegated display the full riches of the eternal friendship of the Trinity.

That divine love-life in God has become, as we see it, the basis for the fellowship and covenant relationship between the Creator and the creature, and between the creatures mutually. That covenant idea is willed by God. He seeks a reflection of His life of friendship in the creature. That is not a cold concept. Nor is there any evidence of insensibility or hardness in it. It is very truly an essentially free and sovereign act of God's will. But its essential character as such is glorious. The life of love and friendship in the economy of God is divinely good and beautiful. To cause His creature to share in it is good and beautiful. This sovereign will of the God of the covenant is the will to reveal and glorify that which is divinely good and glorious. The life and friendship of the Trinity is thus enveloped in the glow of love and grace.

All of this becomes inconceivably more amazing and involved by man's fall into sin and redemption by and in Christ Jesus. The song of recreation has far greater depth of tone than the song of creation. It is a simple matter to find good reasons for this most exalted Self-revelation and Self-glorification of God even by us humans who are of limited understanding. Although we cannot answer all the questions that arise, yet, as we see it, we must seek the solution to the problems in the direction we indicated.

Speaking of grace, we must therefore consider that we are dealing with the God of grace. God is gracious. He is beautiful, appealing, glorious, amiable, completely desirable, worthy of praise. This does not apply merely to His external appearance, but also to His inner being. God is as good as He is great. His goodness is higher than the heavens. He only is good. This exalted God lives with the lowly. He stoops down to them with the fullness of His goodness to cause them to share in the fellowship of His friendship. He does this most eagerly. He persists therein even when man, as far as he is concerned, turns this friendship into enmity through sin. Then it becomes fully evident that God is gracious, merciful, patient, and of great compassion. He justifies the ungodly, and causes His mercy to extend to the sinner in Christ, whom He eternally anointed to be the Covenant-Mediator. He does not forsake the work of His hands. He reveals that His thoughts surpass those of the creatures, even as His ways prove to be higher than their ways.

He has reckoned with sin. Sin serves Him according to the counsel of His will. It is over against sin that grace scintillates in all its glory, according to His good pleasure which He has determined in Himself. More gloriously He now impresses His own divine virtue-image upon the consciousness of the person who is fallen in sin, but enriched with grace in Christ Jesus. He does that in such a manner that this person, filled with the grace of thanksgiving, now bows before Him in praise and adoration, and causes the song of the recreated creation to echo through the heavenly throne-chamber throughout all eternity. Man will even increase God's praise, because God provides for all man's need, grants all the means, and puts everything at his service for His praise.

That is the positive line. With an eternal, unchangeable purpose of irresistible love in Christ His Beloved, and through His work of reconciliation and reunion by the Holy Spirit of regeneration and qualification, He turns to His elect people. He brings that people to faith in Christ, makes them worthy of suffering for Christ, and allows them to experience in Christ the covenant of His friendship. The end-result is that the tabernacle of God is with men, and God shines forth gloriously in Zion in the perfection of beauty. The grace of God has triumphed.

But parallel to that runs the negative line. At the same time and in the same manner as the work of God's elective love that delivers, saves, and exalts to a fellowship of friendship, there is a separating, banishing, rejecting, humiliating action of God's aversion, hate, wrath, anger, and great displeasure in regard to the non-elect, along the line of reprobation. This also takes place according to the immutability of God's will. This must be emphasized. For this is often the issue. Here is where the denial of God's revealed truth begins. Or at least many eagerly make the possibility of salvation dependent upon the sinner. We have shown this previously from history, and the Reformed fathers always opposed it. Emphasis must be laid upon the twofold operation of God's will: from the will of God's eternal good pleasure proceeds the operation of love, election, saving grace; but also the operation of hate, rejection, wretchedness, banishment. Scripture speaks of life and death, of blessing and curse, of light and darkness, struggle, victory, rest, salvation, and the joy of the Lord, but also of increase in unrighteousness, hardening in that which is evil, perishing, condemnation, suffering, punishment, and everlasting fire. Living out of the

principles of sin and grace, humanity is divided into friendship and enmity toward God and toward one another. The development of all things takes place along antithetical lines.

This is almost so obvious, as we see it, that in the light of Scripture, history, and experience no one can receive another impression. We are therefore of the opinion that we must emphatically warn, not only against maintaining a false antithesis, as, for example, between nature and grace, as is done repeatedly by Kuyper and Bavinck, but especially against a false mixture of spiritually similar elements and the resulting separation of various parts of the same life according to definite terrains. There exists but one essential antithesis between God's people and the people of the world in the spiritual-ethical sense of the word: the antithesis of sin and grace. That is the antithesis which Scripture establishes, and we must establish. The children of Adam have all things in common, except grace.

The fact of the matter is that God's grace is not general. According to God's witness, humanity is spiritually split into wheat and chaff, into church and world, into bride and harlot, into children of light and children of darkness. But this occurs while maintaining their natural relationship and organic fellowship. If that were not the case, there would be no essential conflict possible along the entire line of human activity. But since all creatures in their organic fellowship, according to the counsel of God's providence, can experience from moment to moment God's sustaining, cooperating, and governing power, whereby they can develop according to the idea, measure, and place in the entirety of the organism and the eternal destination of each creature, a conflict is carried on in the very bosom of creation because of life out of two mutually exclusive principles.

But these principles are of a spiritual ethical nature, so that natural fellowship as such is not disrupted, but each party makes use of all that belongs to life in this present dispensation, in order to crowd out the life that proceeds from the opposite principle, and to cause its own principle to triumph. Therefore, although the regenerated and the unregenerated experience the same influence of divine powers in mutual, natural, organic fellowship, and that according to each one's inclination and need, according to the demand of their natural relationship and original destiny; and although their life here on earth is amazingly interwoven in all sorts of ways, Adam's children still, because of their differing

spiritual relationship to God, separate in principle always and everywhere, and form a contrast along the entire line of human activity, which keeps pace with the natural organic development of the race and cosmic life, according to the nature of each dispensation and in harmony with the various circumstances of time and place, of life-sphere and relationship. The wedge of God's grace separates them.

That is the fearfulness of God's free grace. If grace were general, there would soon be, even though this was preceded by a period of bitter suffering, a general restoration of all the creatures, and sorrow and crying would flee away forever. Purely from the aspect of principle there would then be no real conflict over principle. But since God shows mercy to whom He will show mercy, and hardens whom He will, there will surely presently be the eternal light; but likewise the outer darkness and eternal fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Therefore it must not surprise us at all that throughout the ages it is exactly the doctrine of grace that has been contradicted. If we have learned from experience to taste that eternal election is meant for us, that we are God's children and that He wills to be our Friend; if we have learned that the bonds of the mercy of the God of the covenant have drawn us out of the estrangement and the bondage of sin and out of all the power of the enemy, yes, certainly, then we have discovered that the mystery of election is great. Then the humbled heart praises God's mercies, and the mouth rejoices: "I am once again the possession of the Lord." Then the Pelagian in us dies, and we, as far as we are concerned, desire to be saved only by grace. Then we understand men like David, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Ursinus, the Reformers in general, and the true martyrs. Then the doctrine of grace is indispensable for us, but also gloriously pleasant.

But as soon as we lack only a little of that rich, conscious knowledge of the mercies of God, then the situation changes. As beautiful as the doctrine of grace may be, and how seemingly easy it is to grasp it, it is extremely difficult to live out of the principle of grace. The sinner wants no grace. And the one on whom grace is bestowed wants only as much as has been bestowed. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. Sin is putting oneself in God's place. When the sovereign God comes with the irresistibly powerful work of His grace in absolute independence from the creature, then He clashes with the enmity of the sinner. By nature the sinner refuses to subject himself to

this irresistible power. He is willing to be saved, but with a salvation invented and realized by himself. He does not want God's grace. As long as God's irresistible grace has not caused the sinful individual to lay aside all enmity against the Creator and made him understand and love God's sovereign good pleasure down into the very deepest imaginations of his heart and desires of his soul, he will continue to detract from the work of God's grace. Man's sin and God's grace are mutually exclusive of each other.

From that aspect it must be explained that not only all unbelievers, but also a great mass of Christians do not want the doctrine of God's free grace. One finds the very common phenomenon that men make God's grace dependent upon sinful man. Men are not opposed to God's grace, if the disposal of it pleases man. Naturally, if this latter were true, man would, by grace, triumph over God. Therefore men try to change God's grace into a work of man. They make all kinds of distinctions, and speak especially of conditions. They speak of baptismal grace, preparatory grace, helping grace, covenant grace, and lastly now also of a common grace, which our human race enjoys, and whereby in the so-called sphere of natural life men are enabled to live a life that is pleasing to God, although only particular grace is saving. Mostly they speak of an objective grace, of which the subjective application is made dependent upon sinful man.

All these distinctions have actually no other purpose than to maintain something in the sinner over against God, a certain capability for natural or spiritual good, or a certain claim upon something in God, even though that be nothing more than God's compassion.

But that is impossible. Such a vain, basically wicked, attempt must fail. In the bestowal of mercy it is exactly the sinner in man that is put down. Irresistibly God forces His grace upon the person who is at enmity with Him, and makes him a partaker of grace. The naturally hostile inclination of the sinner is turned to friendship. The sinner who receives mercy begins to will that which God wills, and because God wills it. Henceforth he finds his knowledge in God's Word and His pleasure in God's will. In case his heart becomes afraid when he sees that God's freely sovereign grace is not common, but sets apart the children of our race and tears asunder the organic bonds of our natural fellowship; and if he scares because of an eternal hell for the reprobate, then he does not set a false sympathy for sinful man over against that

divine good pleasure, but he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling and declares among the people that the Lord is just. In no way whatever does he try to justify sinful man over against the sovereign God, but out of friendship toward his Father in Christ he holds high the good pleasure of the Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation as revealed in the holy gospel. Thereby in principle the idea of God's covenant is realized in him. God's love in Christ finds an echo in his heart and vibrates through his deeds. He is once again friend of God.

The specific aspect of God's favor toward His people is His friendship. By the wonder of God's grace the enmity of sin between God and His chosen people in Christ is abolished, the relationship of friendship is restored, and henceforth God and His people in fellowship together go up in battle against sin, Satan, and the whole realm of darkness. That is the language of our confessions and forms. The historical realization of this relationship of friendship, beginning at the very moment when in the earthly Paradise God put enmity between Satan and the woman, even unto its complete accomplishment in the great day of the Lord, is the history of salvation, the realization of the covenant of grace. By the wonder of grace God lifts the creation in Christ, organically separating the reprobate, out of its fall and brings it to its eternal destination. The course is not back to the Paradise that was lost, nor is there a history running parallel to this history of redemption, a development of the life of creation, that at the beginning made itself manifest only in kernel, and later would enter as a double fruit into glory. No, after the fall the bond that bound us in Adam is broken, but the bond that binds us in Christ remains; and that which is now bound together in Christ enters into the glory of the recreation in and by Christ. That which is not eternally bound up in that Mediator and Redeemer is separated as the organic totality of election is lifted up, and is dashed down into destruction.

After the fall the course of events is not essentially different, but it is deeper. There is no actual restoration of the old, but God's creation-plan for the creature is realized according to the purpose of His eternal counsel in a much deeper manner. All history is included in that plan; God's eternal purpose is realized in the development of all creation, in mutual organic relationships, natural fellowship, spiritual distinctiveness, and all this in relation to Christ.

This historical development proceeds along organic lines. It is bound to organic existence, life, and development of Adam's natural generation. God created us organically, placed us in an organic relationship, so that our life can develop itself only organically. This must be borne in mind. Adam is not merely our moral representative, our juridical head, so that the guilt of his first sin is reckoned to all human beings and they are reckoned as worthy of condemnation before God. This does not explain history. Adam was also the principle of the organism of mankind. From him all human individuals are partakers of the human nature. And now, through the sin of Adam as organic head, that general human nature is corrupted. At our birth we all share in that corrupted nature, and in our own individual way we develop the sin of our generation. Thus in the course of the ages the sin of our generation is fully realized in the sum total of the sins of each human individual. Thereby we can understand that we also daily increase our guilt. And thereby we can also understand that, as our Catechism states, by the fall of Adam and Eve our nature became so corrupt that we are conceived and born in sin; and that disobedience of Adam involves us, since he is the father of us all, and we all have sinned in him. In and by Adam man sinned. Man was friend of God; therefore sin is breach of covenant. He was king of creation, and as such he dragged the entire creation along with him into the fall. In Paradise mankind existed only in its juridical head and organic principle; therefore that first sin was reckoned to all human beings, and the further development of that sin was by various human individuals. This latter takes place along the lines of the natural development of our generation and the development of the totality of creation.

All human individuals in their organic solidarity are connected to the root sin of their organic head, and by their individual sins bring the sin of our generation to its complete development. We found that thought previously also in Kuyper in his *Uit het Woord (From the Word)*, his *E Voto* (the complete title in English is, *Out of the Will of Dort*), and in his *Dictaten Dogmatiek (Dictated Dogmatics)*. This idea is also emphatically on the foreground in our Catechism.

But full justice is not done to it in our Reformed theology. An attempt is made to ascribe our actual sins to our inherited pollution, as punishment upon our original pollution, or the guilt that is reckoned to

us. However, this is impossible, since guilt, pollution, and sin are completely dissimilar concepts. Sin implies guilt; guilt is punished by death; the principle of that death we already have in our pollution. But the actual sins or sinful deeds of the individual children of men grow out of the root of the principle-sin of our generation because of man's organic relationship to the head of the generation, Adam. Mankind is an organism. The various members thereof are both individual persons who share in Adam's guilt, and mutually, in a thousandfold manner, they are independent persons, who are connected organically to the principle-sin of the head of their generation, Adam. Thereby the sin of our generation bears an organic character; and as a result of this, it also applies to our life of sin, as also to the operation of the curse, death, destruction, and the temptation of the devil, the work of the Holy Spirit, the incarnation of the Word, the gathering of the elect and the reprobation of the non-elect, the life of grace as applied to our generation, the spiritual development, the application of principles, and the course of the spiritual battle. It simply applies to all the world events in this present dispensation.

In this manner we understand the course of history. In Paradise we have the kernel; at the end of the ages the ripened fruit. Immediately after the fall God puts the principle of enmity between the devil and the woman and between the spiritual seed of both. At the return of the Lord the enmity is complete. Between these two points lies actual history. Adam and Eve, having received the grace of God, desire to bring forth the spiritual seed. But according to God's will, they also bring forth the children of the devil. They share their corrupt nature with both kinds of children. But God works in His elect the principle of regeneration. Thereby the development of the human race is antithetical. Mankind lives out of two principles which separate. Enmity and conflict arise. The children of men cannot understand each other. The one loves God, the other hates Him. Those who are born according to the flesh persecute those who are born according to the Spirit. Cain kills Abel. The conflict broadens as time goes on. They resort to all sorts of means. There is no possibility of neutrality. An attempt of both parties to create a fellowship in their natural life only leads to an amalgamation of those who are spiritually dissimilar and dashes the first world into a watery grave, in which it is kept unto the eternal fire. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He walked with God, his Friend.

The history of the second world is similar to that of the first. Very soon the new kernel begins to show agreement with the old shell. In Canaan Ham becomes the bearer of the curse over against Shem, who is privileged to call himself according to the name of the Lord. Again there are giants on the earth. Mankind plots violence against heaven. God disrupts the work of the children of men. The principle of the kingdom of Babel are laid: the principle of a human world power. Over against that, God places His people who arise from Abraham. This people shows us in typical form the church of the new dispensation and the eternal kingdom of Christ. More particularly it also allows us to see in this history the spiritual conflict between the people of God and the world powers that are opposed to God. However, it is saved only in its spiritual remnant. The distinction between flesh and spirit runs also through the children, as is also the case in the church in its historical existence here on earth.

The history of the kingdom of mankind is that of the principle of evil. Nebuchadnezzar's dream-image teaches us that. It is thoroughly ground to powder by the Stone out of God's mountains. The development is certainly regressive, turning itself to the earth, and for its final fruit no place is found in the eternal kingdom of Christ. The lines of the historical development of the enmity set by God in the life of our race run therefore, on the one hand, along the line of Cain, Lamech, Nimrod, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, Judas, Nero, the Antichrist, God and Magog and their confederates; and on the other hand, along the line of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Mattathias, Stephen, and the church of witnesses and martyrs. The battle is spiritual. Scripture does not speak of a complete cosmic development, of which some so eagerly dream. The world events are suddenly cut off by a catastrophe: the solving of the world-riddle by King Jesus. Thereupon follows the judgment upon the acquired fruit of men's works: upon that which was done in the body, whether good or evil. The antithesis of eternity is that of friendship and enmity.

According to that standard we must even now judge and evaluate all things. The question is, in what spiritual moral relationship do we stand toward God? Everything else is subordinated to that. Nothing has real value unless we possess it, enjoy it, and use it in God's favor in Christ and in His fellowship and service. That is impossible apart from

regeneration. God's Word absolutely condemns the sinner from the viewpoint of his life principle. Out of that principle, evil can develop to its full manifestation. But if in our judgment sin has not at the moment fully developed, which, if circumstances were different, could very well happen, this does not in the least detract from the reality of man's guilt in Adam. The fact remains, that the sinner can develop himself only out of a wrong life-principle; something is added, but nothing is detracted. The sinner sins in each relationship, according to each talent he possesses, with all the means that are at his disposal. All is turned about in principle in the life of the regenerate. Naturally, sin still works in such a one, and he is also bound to his own place in the organic totality of things, but in a spiritual life-principle he is born of God, detached from the sinful life-principle, and thereby he is in this world, but not of this world.

In harmony with that principle we must determine our place in the community. First of all, we must bear in mind that the principle of regeneration is the beginning of eternal life. It is not a mere restoration of that which perished in sin. We do not stand once more where Adam stood before the fall. By virtue of that new principle we cannot live anew the same creation life, so that we would be able to show to the unregenerate the way in relation to the things of this world. The fact is that the original life is in no way lived anymore. The sinner lives perversely, and in his blindness he attempts to make this earth a paradise, an effort in which he will never succeed. But God's child possesses a life which simply is not found here in this world. That life is foreign here. It is at home in heaven. For that very reason God's child is a stranger here on earth. In life-principle he differs completely from the unregenerate. There is no possibility whatever for a communal cooperation aimed at the advancement of the so-called creation-life, or general human life, both because that life does not exist, and because a development occurs in two mutually exclusive principles. What both can do is to make use of the things of creation. But even as they do this out of different principles, they also do it with a different goal in mind. Neither one can end in the created things as such. Man is inclined to be religious; therefore with all that he is and owns he will always bow down in worship, praise, and thanksgiving either before the true God or before that which he has set up in God's stead.

But something very important must be added. Here on earth the Christian represents the cause of the Lord. His task is not to subject this creation to himself, but to support the cause of Christ. In the cause of Christ he is indeed given by grace not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. That should be understood. Otherwise we will, likely unawares, return to live again out of the original creation-life. That is not possible nor is it permissible. The earthly Paradise is closed to us forever. Through sin we are estranged from all true life and stand damnable before God. But we are shown favor in Christ. This One restores our life to us; nevertheless, not the old life, but the resurrection life. Christ was dead, and is alive again, and now He lives unto all eternity. He is the resurrection and the life. He gives us resurrection life. We enter into His victory, and thereby into the rest. And furthermore we are made worthy to suffer for Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him. We are thereby made God's party.

It will certainly be evident to everyone that in this way we are kept from setting up a false antithesis. We do not want an antithesis between nature and grace, material and spiritual, terrain and sphere. The creation is God's, indeed stolen by Satan, or abandoned by the sinner, but regained by Christ, and in fellowship with Christ it is again in spiritual principle our possession. However, during this dispensation Christ's kingdom does not come in an external form. Nor do we have the typical bounties of Israel of old. As to our physical existence we live and die in the world, which only later will be recreated. Thus as Christians we do not have our own land, kingdom, king, city, house, school, state, etc., as did Israel of the past. We do not even have a "home rule," as the Jews in the time of Christ. We are in the dispersion. We are strangers upon the earth. And our captivity lasts until Christ returns.

We simply place the antithesis between the life-principle of sin and that of grace. We do that because Scripture demands it. Paul thanks God (Rom. 6:17, 18), that we formerly were servants of sin, but now, having been made free from sin, we are made servants of righteousness. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, in order that we should know the things that are given to us of God (I Cor. 2:12). In fellowship with Christ, who is God's, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, present and future things are ours (I Cor. 3:22, 23). But now we must also suffer with Christ, and not regard the things that men see, to which also belongs our light affliction, which

swiftly passes away; but we must regard the things that men do not see, which are eternal. We must no more walk as the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. They are past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19). We must not think it strange concerning the fiery trial that tries us, nor complain to each other because of social injustice, nor love this present world, nor the things in the world. But as pilgrims and strangers, we must withhold ourselves from the carnal lusts that war against the soul.

Thus we do not go out of the world, not because this world is good enough for us, nor because we must associate with and raise to a higher level its so-called world-life; but because we are placed here by God. Our task is to cause the revelation of the true life of God in Christ to shine forth in this world. That life must be placed over against the life of sin. The antithesis between that twofold life must be brought out. Everything must be directed toward that end: energy, gifts, talents, terrains, spheres, institutions, capital, ability to work, knowledge, power, with all else that may stand at our service. All must be employed by us as means to the full development of ourselves from the principle of grace. This entire earthly creation is a means for man, and must therefore be used by us against the work of unrighteousness. In that way we can reveal ourselves as God's participants in the covenant. He who fails in this is in principle a friend of the world. It must also be understood that there is no other way in which we can cooperate with the world. This is the only line of action that can be followed.

Naturally, by doing this we stir up a battle in the world. The world does not so readily allow us to condemn her in regard to her life-principle. On the contrary, she will attempt to convince us of the correctness of her viewpoint, or to force us to silence. Now if both parties continue to carry on the conflict along the line of human deliberation, inclination, expression, and effort to the very extreme, with the weapons of defense and assault, then it will become evident that this generation is like the house that is divided against itself. Then it will also become evident that one cannot, strictly speaking, draw a definite line of separation anywhere, not even between church and state. The principles simply divide our entire human society. There is then no

possibility of a solution of the world-problem. On the contrary, the division and the confusion increase. Our society reaches a dead end. Everything cries for the return of Christ.

But this should not deter us. We must be on our guard that we do not, as Kuyper does with his common grace doctrine, and as happens all around us, allow God and sinful man to arrange themselves in an alliance against physical evil. Evil is of a spiritual-ethical nature, and is in man. Therefore only God and those who have received His grace can fight against sin, Satan, and the kingdom of darkness; and then only with spiritual weapons. It must be clearly understood that the conflict of the ages centers in the name of the Lord and the covenant of our God. Attacking a few external results of sin is of no avail, the real evil only thrives the more profusely. To know the actual struggle, we must go to Gethsemane and Golgotha. But also history itself teaches plainly that no people, how highly civilized they may be, has ever known, apart from God's regenerating grace, how to develop an actual higher moral life before God. But the various spiritual attitudes toward God have always divided the children of men.

Principles must carry through. That will cause the conflict to intensify and become more extensive, and especially become more fearful if the enemy turns the steel sword of the magistrate against us. But that may not be reason for us to give up the conflict, nor may we put our trust in unlawful weapons. For that matter, that would be of no advantage to us. Indeed, the battle is the Lord's. He brings it about. He withdraws also at the right time all disguises from us. If we truly confess the name of the Lord, sooner or later we will certainly come into conflict. After all we cannot remain standing in a neutral position. There is no possibility of an armistice, nor even of giving quarter. Nor can we expect aid from any earthly means or from our own strength. Trusting only in the name of the Lord we must defend the cause of the Lord. His cause will triumph. And God will cause us to see His salvation. ●

John Davenant: A Jewel of the Reformed Churches or a Tarnished Stone?

Mark Shand

Introduction

John Davenant has been described as one of the remarkable divines of the 17th century¹ and has been hailed as the Jewel of the Reformed churches for his eminence at the Synod of Dort.² The “most eminent of the English theologians” to attend that synod and “one of the greatest names to have adorned the English church” are also epitaphs which have been bestowed upon him.³ These are high commendations, considering the other illustrious divines whose lives dotted the ecclesiastical landscape of that century.

¹ Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans* (Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1979), Vol. 2, p. 93.

² George Ella, “Bishop John Davenant and the Death of Christ: A Vindication” *New Focus*, August/September 1997, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 12; Morris Fuller suggests that “none stood higher than [Davenant] did at the Synod of Dort.” Furthermore, Fuller contends that from a theological point of view Davenant stood “head and shoulders higher than any of his compcers thereat.” *The Life, Letters & Writings of John Davenant D.D* (Methuen & Co., London, 1897), p. 192; Neal records that:

Davenant behaved himself with great prudence and moderation during the course of the Synod. He was a quiet and peaceable prelate, humble and charitable, a strict observer of the Sabbath, an enemy of pomp and ceremony and luxury of the clergy. He had a great reputation in foreign parts for profound learning. Neal, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

³ George Smeaton, *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement* (Alpha Publications, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1979), p. 542.

However, not all have spoken in such glowing terms of the former Bishop of Salisbury.⁴ Upon examining his life and doctrine, some have concluded that his position on the extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ was heterodox. Indeed, it has been contended that Davenant promulgated a species of hypothetical universalism and therefore can justly be designated an Amyraldian.⁵

This categorization of Davenant has not met with universal approbation. For example, George Ella laments that Davenant's "reputation has faded due to the present historical re-assessments now causing such havoc in the Reformed Churches."⁶ He describes the notion that Davenant taught hypothetical universalism as a "surprising claim."⁷

After making reference to parts of Davenant's writings, Ella suggests that, "Anyone sifting through such words to find 'hypothetical universalism' and 'well meant offer' are not looking for needles in hay stacks, they are planting contaminated needles in otherwise healthy hay."⁸

The purpose of this paper is to explore the question of whether Davenant has properly been characterized as an Amyraldian or whether he has been unjustly vilified.

4. Herman Hanko, *The History of the Free Offer* (Grandville, Michigan: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1989), pp. 82, 83; *Universalism and the Reformed Churches: A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism* (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia), p. 7.

5. Hanko, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 83; Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1982); Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyrault Heresy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 99n. Armstrong styled Davenant as "a near Amyraldian"; Marc D. Carpenter, "A History of Hypo-Calvinism" *The Trinity Review*, No. 145, March 1997, p. 2; Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 190.

6. Ella, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Before embarking upon this exercise, it is appropriate to note that, despite the vigorous denials of Ella by which he suggests that Davenant was orthodox in his views on the atonement, there is no doubt, as will become apparent, that Davenant's views on the atonement were certainly not Reformed nor orthodox. His views on the extent of the atonement, like those of Moises Amyraut, reeked of universalism. The question that lies before us is not whether Davenant held the Reformed position as regards the atonement, because clearly he did not. Rather, the issue is whether his doctrine on the atonement can legitimately be equated with that of Amyraut.⁹

It is the thesis of this paper that although the views of Davenant were not in all respects in accord with those views subsequently expressed by Amyraut, nonetheless Davenant's views in a practical sense were so similar to those of Amyraut that it is not unreasonable to classify him as an Amyraldian or at least a near Amyraldian.

CHAPTER 1

The Life of John Davenant

Before casting the microscope over the teachings of Davenant, it is necessary to delve in some detail into his background. Clearly, when he enunciated his views upon the atonement, he did not speak or write in a vacuum. Therefore, the primary purpose in examining Davenant's life is to become acquainted with those issues which influenced his writings. In this regard, it is of particular importance to examine Davenant's participation at the Synod of Dort because it was there that his views on the atonement initially came to prominence.

Who then was John Davenant? Davenant was born on 20 May 1572 in London. His father was an influential merchant in that city. In 1587, at the age of 15, he was admitted to Queen's College at Cambridge where he obtained his degree of Master of Arts in 1594. He studied Classical and Biblical languages, Logic, Ethics, Rhetoric, History,

⁹ Interestingly, discussion of Davenant's aberrant views on the atonement usually relate to whether or not he can properly be designated an Amyraldian, but that is perhaps somewhat surprising given that his views preceded those of Amyraut by at least a decade.

Science, Law, Politics, and Divinity. In 1601, he secured his Bachelor of Divinity and proceeded to obtain his Doctorate in Divinity in 1609.

Davenant had a rapid rise to prominence within the Church of England, so that by 1614 he had become an influential churchman. He was appointed Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1614.

His principal claim to fame came in 1618, when he, together with four other theologians, was selected by King James I to represent the Church of England at the Synod of Dort. Because of England's close political ties with Holland and the desire of the Dutch to resolve certain controversial doctrinal issues, numerous theologians from throughout Europe were invited to attend that synod.

The background to the Synod of Dort is important to our considerations because it highlights one significant body of prevailing theological thought on the atonement. That view became the focus of considerable and at times acrimonious discussion during the course of the synod. Let us examine briefly the background to the Synod.

The states of Holland had no sooner established their freedom from the yoke of Spain than they were embroiled in theological contentions, which soon became intermingled with political machinations. After the assassination of William the Silent in 1584, William's son Maurice and Jan van Oldenbarneveldt provided leadership in Holland. However, as time went on, the two leaders drifted into disagreement. Against this background, there were difficulties also within the church, and those difficulties were exacerbated because Maurice and van Oldenbarneveldt supported the opposing sides. It is not necessary for our purposes to go into specific detail of all the issues which troubled the church in Holland. However, it is worthwhile noting that one of the issues which caused consternation related to the order of the divine decrees.

The doctrine of the divine decrees had been left by the Belgic Confession in the undefined simplicity of the Scriptures. However, in the period immediately following the Reformation, attempts were made to identify more authoritatively the order of the decrees, some favoring the supralapsarian position and others the sublapsarian position.

These disputes were relatively insignificant until 1591, when James Arminius, professor of Divinity at the University of Leyden, was called upon to give his judgment on certain statements concerning

predestination made by the Dutch humanist and evangelical, Dirck Coornheert.

The request to Arminius had arisen because Coornheert, in a somewhat unguarded way, had advanced certain opinions concerning predestination. The ministers of Delft disagreed with the views expressed by Coornheert and responded to him in writing. In doing so, they advocated the generally received sublapsarian position. Not surprisingly, their response caused offense to those who maintained the supralapsarian view. Therefore Arminius, as the most talented divine of the day, was requested to give his opinion on the matter. He was exhorted by both sides to support their respective positions. On the one hand his friend Martin Lydius solicited him to vindicate the supralapsarian views of his former tutor, Theodore Beza, while on the other hand, he was exhorted by the Synod of Amsterdam to adopt the sublapsarian position.¹⁰

Placed in this somewhat invidious position, Arminius embarked upon an examination of the whole question of the decrees of God. His examination of the issues induced him to change his views and directed his thinking and beliefs into the teachings which now bear his name. Because of his shift in thinking, Arminius never completed his report on the disputed matters.

However, his newly held convictions led to disputations within the Reformed Church and seriously threatened its peace.¹¹

¹⁰. John Davenant, *An Exposition to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, translated from the original Latin by Josiah Allport, (James Family Christian Publishers, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1979), p. xii.

¹¹. The views adopted by Arminius have subsequently been titled the Five Points of Arminianism, and in summary are as follows:

1. God from all eternity has determined to bestow salvation on those whom He foresaw would persevere to the end in their Christian faith, and to inflict everlasting punishment on those whom He foresaw would continue in their unbelief, and to resist His divine succors.
2. Jesus Christ, by His death and sufferings, has made an atonement for the sins of all mankind, and of every individual; but none except those who believe in Him can be partakers of this divine benefit.
3. True faith cannot proceed from the exercise of our natural faculties and powers, nor from the force and operation of free-will; since man,

Matters were further inflamed in 1605, when the Classis of Dort transmitted a grievance, primarily aimed at Arminius, to the University of Leyden. It read:

Inasmuch as rumours are heard that certain controversies have arisen in the Church and University of Leyden, concerning the doctrines of the Reformed churches, this Class has judged it necessary that the synod should deliberate respecting the safest and most speedy method of settling those controversies; that all the schisms and causes of offence which spring out of them may be seasonably removed, and the union of the Reformed churches preserved inviolate against the calumnies of adversaries.¹²

The grievance offended the sensibilities of moderate men on both sides of the debate and resulted in the professors responding,

that they wished the Dort class had, in this affair, acted with greater discretion, and in a more orderly manner; that, in their opinion, there were more disputes among the students than was agreeable to them as the Professors; but, that among themselves, the Professors of Theology, no difference existed that could be considered as affecting, in the least, the

in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable of doing or thinking any good thing; and therefore regeneration, or renewal by the operation of the Holy Ghost which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, is necessary to man's conversion and salvation.

4. This divine grace or energy of the Holy Ghost, which heals the disorders of a corrupt nature, begins, advances, and brings to perfection every thing which can be called good in man; consequently, all good works are to be attributed to God alone, and to the operation of His grace; nevertheless, this grace does not constrain any man to act against his inclination, but may be resisted, and rendered ineffectual, by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.

5. They who are united to Christ by faith are thereby furnished with abundant succors to enable them to triumph over the seduction of Satan and the allurements of sin and temptation; but such may fall from their faith, and finally forfeit this state of grace.

¹². Davenant, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

fundamentals of doctrine; and that they would endeavour to diminish the disputes among the Students.¹³

This was not exactly the response that the Classis of Dort desired. The result of these communiqués was to bring the matter before the public, and thereby a flame of controversy spread throughout the United Provinces. The result of the dispute was that it split the Reformed Church. In 1609, in the midst of this turmoil, Arminius died. After his death, his followers abandoned many of the views which he had held in common with Calvin, particularly on the issue of justification by faith. They became universally lax, both in their opinions and in the way in which they lived.

Attempts were made by both sides in the dispute to gain the support of their political masters. Arminius' followers presented a remonstrance to the States-General of the Dutch Provinces in 1610 from which they obtained the name of Remonstrants. Their opponents countered this maneuver by presenting a counter remonstrance, thereby earning a place in history under the name of Contra-Remonstrants.

There were calls by the Contra Remonstrants for a national synod to resolve the dispute, but this was not favored by van Oldenbarneveldt.¹⁴ Therefore, the provinces refused this demand. However, shortly thereafter, the political landscape in Holland was dramatically altered with the demise of van Oldenbarneveldt. The theological dispute was threatening to get totally out of hand, even to the extent of threatening the stability of the country. The seriousness of the situation prompted four out of the seven United provinces to agree in 1618 to the holding of a national synod. That synod was appointed to be held at Dort.

As noted above, invitations to attend the synod were extended to various countries in Europe. Letters were sent to the French Huguenots and to the different Protestant States of Germany and Switzerland, requesting them to send deputies to assist the deliberations.

Because of the close Anglo-Dutch political ties which existed at

¹³. *Ibid.*

¹⁴. *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, J. D. Douglas ed. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978), p. 70.

that time, it was only natural that English views should also be sought. England under Elisabeth had played a significant role in securing independence for the seven northern provinces from Spain, and any threat to their continued survival remained a matter of importance to England.¹⁵

James I, partly for political motives and partly because of his love of theological controversies, complied with this request and selected five well credentialed theologians to attend the synod, viz., Davenant, Dr. George Carleton, Bishop of Landaff, Dr. John Hall, Dean of Worcester, Dr. Samuel Ward, Master of Sydney Sussex College, and Walter Balcanqual, a presbyter of the Church of Scotland. Hall subsequently fell ill and was forced to return to England, and his place was taken by Dr. Thomas Goad, Precentor of St. Paul's and Chaplain to the Primate, Abbot.

Prior to attending the synod, the English delegation was summoned before James I and Archbishop Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to receive specific instructions as to the approach which it was to adopt to the issues which would arise at the synod.

The instructions included *inter alia* the following:

You shall, in all points to be debated and disputed, resolve among yourselves before-hand, what is the true state of the question, and jointly and uniformly agree thereupon.

If, in debating the cause by the learned men there, anything be emergent, whereof you thought not before, you shall meet and consult thereupon again, and so resolve among yourselves jointly, what is fit to be maintained. And this to be done agreeable to the Scriptures, and the doctrine of the Church of England.

That if there be main opposition between any, who are over-much addicted to their opinions, your endeavour shall be, that certain Propositions be moderately laid down, which may tend to the mitigation of heat on both sides.¹⁶

¹⁵ Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 88.

¹⁶ Morris Fuller, *The Life, Letters & Writings of John Davenant D.D* (Methuen & Co., London, 1897), pp. 75, 76.

In addition to these instructions, the divines were also instructed by both the king and the archbishop to oppose strongly any attempt to meddle with the doctrine of the Church of England and furthermore to be preemptory in introducing into the determinations of the synod, the universality of Christ's redemptive work.¹⁷

As will be observed, when controversy arose at the synod, the king's instructions had the effect of restraining the individual English delegates from fully expressing their personal views in public. This constraint needs to be borne in mind when seeking to understand the position of Davenant on the matters discussed at Dort.

CHAPTER 2

Proceedings at the Synod of Dort

The Dutch Arminians did not arrive at Dort until late November 1618. When they did arrive, their appearance turned into a farce. They were treated from the outset as the accused, a position which they rejected.¹⁸ Under the leadership of Simon Episcopius, they resorted to several procedural maneuvers designed to delay the synod in its work. These tactics were employed, possibly in the hope that time would bring a favorable change in the political situation. As it was, their tactics prevented any official judgment being made at Dort until early January 1619, when, because of their attitude toward the synod, they were dismissed.¹⁹ Though the Remonstrants were no longer present at the synod, their doctrinal views were extracted from their published writings and dealt with under the five principal points which characterized their doctrine.

^{17.} Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 78. The veracity of this instruction as it pertains to the universality of Christ's redemptive work has been challenged. Cf. Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 168n.

^{18.} It is not the purpose of this paper to explore the rights and the wrongs associated with the manner in which the synod proceeded.

^{19.} The synod subsequently condemned them *in absentia*.

Each body of delegates was required to reduce their views to writing, so that they could be presented to the synod in a cogent form. This requirement was also designed to facilitate the collation of a mutually agreeable statement at the conclusion of the synod.

The first issue which came under the synod's purview was predestination. This matter presented no great difficulties, with general agreement being reached on the unconditional nature of the decrees of election and reprobation.

The second matter which was discussed was the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ, and it proved to be not quite so simple as the issue of predestination.

The Remonstrants, as regards the atonement, rested their contentions on the sharp distinction that they drew between the accomplishment of Christ on the cross and the application of that accomplishment to the lives of men. Their basic notion was that Christ made salvation possible for all men, but that this salvation was actualized in men only by their response of faith. In other words, they propounded a conditional salvation which was dependent upon man for acceptance.

In summary, the position of the Remonstrants was that:

1. The price of the redemption which Christ offered to God the Father is not only in itself and by itself sufficient for the redemption of the whole human race but has also been paid for all men and for every man, according to the decree, will, and grace of God the Father; therefore no one is absolutely excluded from participation in the fruits of Christ's death by an absolute and antecedent decree of God.
2. Christ has, by the merit of his death, so reconciled God the Father to the whole human race that the Father, on account of that merit, without giving up His righteousness and truth, has been able and has willed to make and confirm a new covenant of grace with sinners and men liable to damnation.
3. Though Christ has merited reconciliation with God and remission of sins for all men and for every man, yet no one, according to the pact of the new and gracious covenant, becomes a true partaker of the benefits obtained by the death of Christ in any other way than by faith; nor are sins forgiven to sinning men before they actually believe in Christ.
4. Only those are obliged to believe that Christ died for them for whom Christ has died. The reprobates, however, as they are called, for whom Christ has not died, are not obligated to such faith, nor can they be justly condemned on account of the contrary refusal to believe this. In fact, if

there should be such reprobates, they would be obliged to believe that Christ has not died for them.²⁰

All the members of the synod, including Davenant, agreed that these theses were unacceptable.²¹ However, the delegates to the synod found that they could not agree so easily on an acceptable orthodox reply to the Remonstrant position. Indeed, the discussions of the Second Article produced tensions and bitterness among the orthodox of the synod.

This issue also occasioned a divergence of views among the

²⁰ Peter Y. De Jong, *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619*. (Reformed Fellowship Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan), pp. 224, 225. The purpose in detailing the assertions of the Remonstrants is that it assists in discovering the parameters of Davenant's own views.

²¹ The English delegation identified their differences with the Remonstrants in a letter which they wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury dated 21 March 1618 where they said:

In our avouching and declaring in this and other Articles, some fruits of Christ's death, not comprised in the Decree of election, but afforded more generally, yet confined to the Visible Church (as viz. true and spiritual Graces accompanying the Gospel, and conferred upon some *non-electi*) we gain ground of the Remonstrants, and thereby easily repel, not only their Instances of Apostasie, but also their odious imputation of illusion in the general propounding of the Evangelical Promises, as we are ready more clearly to demonstrate. Nor do we with the Remonstrants leave at large the benefit of our Saviour's death, as only propounded loosely to all *ex aequo*, and to be applied by the arbitrary act of man's will; but we expressly avouch, for the behoof of the Elect, a special intention both in Christ's offering, and God the Father accepting, and from that intention a particular application of that Sacrifice, by conferring Faith and other Gifts infallibly bringing the Elect to Salvation. And that our care in advancing this Doctrine might be the more remarkable, we in these our Theses have set in the forefront our Propositions concerning God's special Intention. John Hale's *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable Mr. John Hales* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb for Robert Pawlet, 1673), p. 185.

English delegation. These divisions grew out of the significant diversity of opinion that existed within the so-called Reformed consensus.

Davenant and Ward took a view of the nature and extent of Christ's atonement which was not shared by the other members of the English contingent.²² On the question of the nature and extent of the atonement, Davenant and Ward maintained what could probably be called a middle course between the Reformed and Arminian positions. They held to the certainty of the salvation of the elect; but they also held that an offer of pardon was made not only to such as believed and repented, but to all who heard the gospel. They also held that a sufficient measure of grace to convince the impenitent, so as to lay their condemnation on themselves, accompanied the offer of salvation; and they held that the redemption of Christ was universal, and, consequently, that salvation was attainable by all.²³ Davenant felt so strongly about this issue that he declared that he would sooner cut off his hand than rescind any word of it.

While the views of Davenant and Ward were opposed by the other English delegates, they all rejected the distinction drawn by the Remonstrants between the accomplishment of reconciliation by Christ's faith and the application of the benefits of His death. Beyond that fundamental agreement lay many other differences of thought and expression.

The nature of the disputation within the ranks of the English delegation is evident from the following report of Balcanqual to Sir Dudley Carlton. Balcanqual wrote:

the question amongst us is whether the words of the Scripture, which are likewise the words of our confession, (Christ died for the whole human race, even for the sins of the whole world") are to be understood of all particular men, or only of the elect who consist of all sorts of men. Dr. Davenant and Dr. Ward are of Martinus of Breme his mind, that is to be understood of all particular men. The other three [Balcanqual, George

²². Indications of the doctrinal positions of the English delegates can be gleaned from the reports sent from Dort to Sir Dudley Carlton. Carlton was the English special ambassador to the United Provinces. He initially received reports from his chaplain, John Hales, and latterly from Walter Balcanqual.

²³. Neal, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 467.

Carleton and Goad] take the other exposition, which is of the writers of the Reformed Churches and namely of my late Lord of Salisbury. Both sides think that they are right, and therefore cannot yield one unto the another with a safe conscience.²⁴

Balcanqual suggested that further discussion of this matter be postponed until the end of the synod and that, in the interim, English church leaders be consulted. This was done. However, for reasons which are not presently important, conflicting advice was received by the English delegates from James I and Archbishop Abbot. In any event, both advices arrived too late to assist the English delegation in the formulation of their written submission or *Judicium* to the synod regarding the atonement.

In an attempt to avoid controversy within their own ranks and to comply with the king's initial instructions, the English delegation attempted to omit all controversial references.²⁵ They formulated a response which took into account the divergent views within their own ranks. This is evident from the description of the English *Judicium* given by Balcanqual:

There was read the judgment of the divines of Great Britain upon the Second Article; they were briefer than upon the First Article, they left the received distinction of *sufficientia* and *efficacia mortis Christi* untouched; as likewise they did not touch that received restriction of those places which make Christ's sufferings general to the world, only *ad mundum Electorum*.²⁶

In their final form, the English *Judicium* comprised six propositions and three rejections of error, all of which were explained and defended.²⁷ The first two positive statements reflected the attitudes of Carleton, Balcanqual, and Goad. These emphasized the Reformed

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hales, *op. cit.*, pp. 130, 131.

²⁷ Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

position that Christ died efficaciously for the elect to give them faith and all other gifts necessary for salvation. The four remaining theses were designed to grant significant concessions to the consciences of Davenant and Ward. The remaining theses dealt with the more general love of God toward the whole creation. Avoiding both the Arminian and purportedly Reformed extremes, these theses proposed an expanded view of sufficiency. They referred to a general promise and a conditional covenant. The special intention of God for the elect was supplemented by his general and sufficient intention for all mankind.²⁸ Compromise had raised its multifaceted and ugly head!

The understanding of the English submissions, at least so far as Davenant was concerned, is reflected in the reasons which he prepared in relation to the Second Article. He wrote:

For the universality of the promises of the Gospel, which is the Second Article, the Church of England, doth teach *Atric. Relig. 7 de Predestinatione*. That we must receive God's promises, in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture; where our Church doth signify that the promises of God in the Gospel do appertain to all generally to whom they are published, and according to this we hold, that *the reason why the promises of the Gospel are not effectual to all to whom they are published, is not through any defect in Christ's death, as though he had not truly founded and ratified by his death and passion the Evangelical Covenant or promise to all; or that this promise pertained not to all; or, that God did not thereby seriously invite all, to whom this Evangelical promise is propounded in the Ministry of the word, to repentance, and faith, and so consequently to the participation of the benefits promised therein: but the defect is inherent in man who will not receive that grace, that is truly and seriously offered on God's part.*²⁹ [Emphasis MS]

The stand taken by the English divines led subsequently to the allegation that they had deserted the doctrine of the Church of England. To this Davenant replied:

I know that no man can embrace Arminianism in the doctrines of predestination and grace, but he must desert the articles agreed upon by

²⁸. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²⁹. Hales, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

the church of England; nor in the point of perseverance, but he must vary from the received opinions of our best approved doctors in the English church.³⁰

Clearly, Davenant rejected Arminianism but maintained a view of the atonement which held that Christ in some respect had died for all.

The English delegation were in a clear minority on this issue. Most of the other delegations wanted to distinguish between the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ's death. They asserted that the atonement of Christ upon the cross was sufficient for all but that it was not efficacious for all, as it was not intended for all. This position was eventually reflected in the Canons which were formulated at the conclusion of the Synod.³¹ Article 8 of the Second Head of Doctrine states:

For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son *should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation:* that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language, all those, and *those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father;* that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment in his own presence forever.³² [Emphasis MS]

³⁰ Neal, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 467.

³¹ It is of interest to note that, despite the wording of the Canons, Ward, because the biblical references to "all men" were not specifically equated with the elect alone, felt able to assert that the Canons had defined "nothing ... which might gainsay the confession of the Church of England." Usher, *Works*, xv. 145.

³² Hales, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-132.

While from one perspective, it can be asserted that the Canons repudiate expressly the views of Davenant and Ward, it is also evident that the Canons were couched in such terms as to be not overly offensive to any of the delegations present at Dort. This view of the Canons is supported by the fact that all of the delegates, including Franciscus Gomarus and Matthias Martinus, signed their names to the Canons, yet those men were not in agreement with the views of other members of the synod on a number of issues.³³ It is interesting to observe that the Canons do not contain a specific statement which categorically denies a universal intent, though, as observed above, there are statements which explicitly contend that the work of Christ is a product of God's everlasting love for the elect and is specifically ordained to save them. It would seem that this lack of a positive rejection that Christ's death on the cross was for all men was the reason why men such as Davenant and Ward were prepared to append their signatures to the Canons at the close of the synod.

As we shall observe shortly, Davenant acknowledged that there was a special grace whereby Christ's death was specifically for the elect. However, he also asserted that Christ's death was also for all men, though not savingly. Rather, Christ's death was for all men so that they might be saved in the event that they should believe.

Given this distinction, it is possible to appreciate how Davenant could be persuaded to adopt the synod's statements which indicated that the efficacy of Christ's death was limited to those only who had been from all eternity elected to salvation.

Following the synod, Davenant returned to England where he, and the other delegates, were graciously welcomed by the king. A job well done, from the king's perspective—or was it a betrayal of the truth?

³³. Stephen Strehle, "The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort" *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Spring 1989, p. 19.

CHAPTER 3

Davenant's Writings

Davenant was not a prolific writer by the standards of his day, though he published a number of works during his lifetime.³⁴

In 1641, he published a treatise in which he responded to Samuel Hoard's book entitled *God's Love of Mankind, Manifested by Disproving his Absolute Decree for their Damnation*. Davenant's reply was entitled *Animadversions written by the Right Rev. Father in God, John, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, upon a Treatise intituled, God's Love to Mankind*. In this work, Davenant maintains the unconditional nature of the decree of election, while at the same time maintaining that this does not exclude the sufficiency of grace being given to all. He furthermore acknowledges that reprobation is necessarily involved in election. In that regard, he states: "Reprobation is not a denial of sufficient grace, but a denial of such special grace, as God knoweth would infallibly bring them to glory."³⁵

However, so far as our inquiries are concerned, the most significant works of Davenant were published some years after his death. Two works were published together, the smaller being entitled *On the Controversy Among the French Divines of the Reformed Church Concerning the Gracious and Saving Will of God Towards Sinful Men* and the larger under the title of *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*.³⁶

We will examine the statements made by Davenant in both of these works in an attempt to define more clearly his views on the extent of the atonement.

³⁴. The most significant work that he published was his "Exposition to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians," which was published in 1627.

³⁵. Davenant, *An Exposition*, p. xlii.

³⁶. The full title to this work is *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ as to its Extent and Special Benefits containing a short History of Pelagianism, and Shewing the Agreement of the Doctrine of the Church of England on General Redemption, Election, and Predestination with the Fathers of the Christian Church and Above all with the Holy Scriptures*.

It is unclear as to when precisely either of these works were written, though undoubtedly both were completed following Davenant's attendance at the Synod of Dort.

In his *On the Controversy*, Davenant makes reference to Dr. John Cameron, but not to Moises Amyraut, which suggests that this work was written prior to Amyraut coming to theological prominence in France. This dictates that the work was completed probably prior to 1634, when Amyraut published his first controversial work on the atonement, entitled *Treatise of Predestination*.

The precise date of the writing of *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* is also uncertain. However, references within the treatise to statements made at the Synod of Dort suggest that its final form was arrived at after the conclusion of the Synod in 1619.³⁷

We turn our attention initially to *On the Controversy*. The Gallican churches had not attended the Synod of Dort. However, the issue of the extent of the atonement, which proved to be the most difficult point for the synod, was also an issue within the Gallican churches.

Following Dort, the Gallican churches wrote to the English delegates in the following terms, "The opinion of the divines of England, the most celebrated in the whole Christian world, is requested on this controversy, as it appears that this might conduce not a little towards confirming the peace of the Reformed Church in France."³⁸ Following his attendance at the Synod of Dort, Davenant appears to have been held in high esteem. As a result of his enhanced reputation, Davenant was selected to reply to the Gallican churches on behalf of the English delegates.

The issues which enveloped the French church concerned the gracious and saving will of God toward sinful men. Within the French church, there were those who contended for "particular election in Christ, through the mere good pleasure of God of some certain persons

³⁷. Davenant refers to the theses presented by various colleges at the Synod of Dort and includes several quotations from the *Acta Synodi*.

³⁸. John Davenant, *On the Controversy Among the French Divines of the Reformed Church Concerning the Gracious and Saving Will of God Towards Sinful Men* (London : Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1832), p. 561.

and their effectual and irrevocable calling to grace and glory.”³⁹ However, others asserted that Christ died for all men individually, “with some general intention on his part,” so that God, by His universal grace, “by a suitable invitation and calling to repentance ... gives to all individually that they may be saved if they will.”⁴⁰ This view encompassed the notion that salvation was the work of the individual and that a failure to take up the opportunity of salvation was attributable to the hardness of the individual’s own heart. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who propounded this view drew support from the statements made at the Synod of Dort by some of the English delegates.⁴¹ Dr. John Cameron, who was an eminent divine among the French Protestants, propounded this view.⁴² This is of particular interest in the context of our considerations, given that Moises Amyraut studied under Cameron and appears to have developed his teaching of hypothetical universalism from the views taught by Cameron. We will return to explore this issue later in this paper.

The opponents of these views within the French church denied that Christ died individually for all men, with the intention of saving them, and furthermore they also denied that God willed that all men individually should be saved.⁴³

In responding to these views, Davenant stated generally that the will of God towards sinners manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, there are those who fall under God’s special mercy, and as such they receive the means of saving grace with the result that they become recipients of eternal life. Secondly, Davenant contended that, by virtue of God’s “common philanthropy” and the covenant of grace, He had appointed the means of a saving grace which was sufficient for the salvation of all men. In respect of such individuals, Davenant opined that, in some

^{39.} *Ibid.*

^{40.} *Ibid.*

^{41.} *Ibid.*, p. 562.

^{42.} *Ibid.*

^{43.} *Ibid.*

instances, this conferred saving grace, but not always. He expressed himself in this way:

The gracious and saving will of God towards sinners is to be considered, as effectually applying to some persons, of his special mercy, the means of saving grace, according to that saying of the apostle, *He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy*; or, as appointing sufficiently for all, of his common philanthropy, the means of a saving grace, applicable to all for salvation, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, as the Evangelist has said, *God so loved the world*, &c. Those whom the Divine will or good pleasure embraces under the first description, on them it always confers the means of saving grace in this life, and the end of this grace, that is, life eternal, or glory, in the world to come.... *Those whom the Divine will embraces only under the latter description, on them it sometimes confers the means of saving grace, and sometimes does not; but it never confers the end of grace, that is, eternal life.*⁴⁴ [Emphasis MS]

The meaning of the assertion contained in the latter part of this quotation, that the atonement of Christ sometimes confers saving grace but that such saving grace “never confers the end of grace, that is, eternal life,” is not immediately transparent, though other portions of this work suggest that it should be read to mean that such saving grace in and of itself will not bring eternal life, but that eternal life is conditional upon the work of the individual.

Having made these general comments, Davenant then turns his attention to the precise wording of the propositions which were referred to him by the Gallican churches. In addressing the proposition that “Christ died for all men individually, with some general intention,” Davenant says:

Christ is *rightly said to have died for all men*, inasmuch as on his death is founded a *covenant of salvation, applicable to all men* while they are in this world. *Nor can he be improperly said to have died for each individually*, inasmuch as his death may profit each for salvation, according to the tenor of the new covenant, none being excluded.⁴⁵ [Emphasis MS]

⁴⁴. *Ibid.*, p. 563.

⁴⁵. *Ibid.*, p. 564.

In support of these views, Davenant asserts that the Scriptures speak of the will of God in two different ways. He contends that the divine will sometimes simply denotes the appointment of a means to an end, although there is no determinative will in God of producing that end by those means. In this sense, God, with a general intention, wills life to all men, inasmuch as He willed the death of Christ to be the fountain and cause of life to all men individually.

Secondly, he contends that the Scriptures speak of the will or intention of God in respect of those things which never fail to produce the good intended, or, as Davenant styles it, "God's special predestination."

Having identified those two wills, Davenant concludes that if the notion of a general intention of God to procure the salvation of all men by the death of Jesus Christ is thought to encompass the idea that the special will of God in effecting the salvation of the elect is excluded, then that is to be rejected. In other words, he seeks to maintain the doctrine of election. However, he goes on to say that, if what is being asserted is that the benefit of the death of Christ is intended for all men individually, then that is acceptable. He states:

But if by this general intention they mean nothing more than a general aptitude and sufficiency in the death of Christ to effect the salvation of all men individually in the mode of an universal cause, or a general appointment of God concerning salvation of all men individually, who through the grace, duly apply to themselves this universal cause: then there is no need to reject this form of speaking.⁴⁶

Davenant then turns his attention to the next proposition, namely that God by His universal grace founded in the death of Christ, by a suitable invitation and calling to repentance, grants to all men individually, that they may be saved, if they will, though this occurs in different ways.⁴⁷

Davenant rejects the use of the term universal grace, noting that those gifts which are bestowed upon all men individually should not be

⁴⁶ Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

referenced to the grace of God, but to the common philanthropy of God. He notes that if those who assert such things mean that the grace of God is given and actually communicated to every individual of the human race, "he does not see by what means this form of speech can be defended."⁴⁸ However, he goes on to say:

But if by universal grace, he means nothing more than an universal capacity of salvation in all persons living in this world, or an universal propensity in God, to save every man, if he should believe in Christ, he ought to correct his language, lest by unusual and a less sound form of words, he should give offence to the orthodox.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Davenant rejects the notion that God by His universal grace grants to all men individually that they may be saved, if they will. In virtually the same breath, he goes on to say, "I do not dispute that all men individually may be saved, who are rightly willing to believe in Christ."⁵⁰ He then, somewhat revealingly, goes on to say "that universal grace is not proved by a power of obtaining salvation."⁵¹

Davenant also seeks to clarify the position which was adopted by the English divines at Dort. In that regard, he says:

I know that the opinion of the English divines given at the Synod of Dort, neither establishes universal grace, nor acknowledges that apt and sufficient means of salvation are granted to all men individually upon whom the Gospel hath not shone. Lastly, I think that *no divine of the Reformed Church of sound judgment, will deny a general intention or appointment concerning the salvation of all men individually by the death of Christ, on this condition — If they should believe. For the intention or appointment of God is general, and is plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, although the absolute and not to be frustrated intention*

⁴⁸. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁴⁹. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵¹. *Ibid.*

of God, concerning the gift of faith and eternal life to some persons, is special, and is limited to the elect alone.⁵² [Emphasis MS]

We turn now to Davenant's *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*. As indicated by the title to the treatise, Davenant in this work expounds his views concerning the nature and extent of the atoning work of Christ upon the cross. As will be observed, he continues to espouse essentially the same views as those in *On the Controversy*.

At the outset, he postulates two views concerning the death of Christ, one based upon the notion that the death of Christ was for all mankind, and the other confining the death of Christ to the elect alone. He notes that those who extend the death of Christ to all mankind generally, concede that its beneficial reception is applied only to certain persons in particular. On the other hand, he notes that those who confine the death of Christ to the elect alone, also acknowledge that its benefits extend to all those who are called, even to all men, if they would believe.⁵³ By these statements, Davenant seeks to plant the seed of doubt in the mind of his readers that the differences between the two views may not be as great as they may have perceived. He seeks to reinforce this notion, when he says that, if he should "treat the death of Christ under this twofold view, it will perhaps appear that in some things which are contested with eagerness, there are rather various modes of speaking than different opinions."⁵⁴

In the first chapter of this work, Davenant embarks upon a historical excursus into the origins of the question concerning the death of Christ and of its intended latitude or extent. He contends that, prior to the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius, no question arose within the church as to whether the death of Christ was to be extended to all mankind or whether it was to be confined only to the elect.⁵⁵ He says

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁵³ This is an inaccurate statement of the position of those who hold to a particular atonement.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵⁵ John Davenant, *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* (London: Adams & Co., Birmingham, 1832), p. 318.

that the early church fathers, when speaking of the death of Christ, described it as having been "undertaken and endured for the redemption of the human race; and not a word (that I know of) occurs among them of the exclusion of any persons by the decree of God."⁵⁶ He goes on to acknowledge that those same fathers considered that the death of Christ was only beneficial to those who believed, while at the same time maintaining that they confessed that Christ died on behalf of all mankind.

Having conducted a historical analysis, Davenant deals with the subject under five propositions.

1. The death of Christ is represented in holy Scripture as *an universal remedy*, by the ordinance of God, and the nature of the thing itself, *applicable for salvation to all and every individual*.⁵⁷ [Emphasis MS]

2. The death of Jesus Christ is the universal cause of the salvation of mankind, and Christ himself is acknowledged to have *died for all men sufficiently, not by reason of the mere sufficiency or of the intrinsic value*, according to which the death of God is a price more than sufficient for redeeming a thousand worlds; *but by reason of the Evangelical covenant confirmed with the whole human race* through the merit of this death, and of the Divine ordination depending upon it, *according to which, under the possible condition of faith, remission of sins and eternal life is decreed to be set before every moral man who will believe it*, on account of the merits of Christ.⁵⁸ [Emphasis MS]

3. The death or passion of Christ, as the universal cause of the salvation of mankind, hath, by the act of its oblation, so far rendered God the Father pacified and reconciled to the human race, that he can be truly said to be ready to receive into favour any man whatever, as soon as he shall believe in Christ; yet the aforesaid death of Christ does not place any one, at least of adults, in a state of grace, of actual reconciliation, or of salvation, before he believes.⁵⁹

⁵⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁵⁷. *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 341.

⁵⁸. *Ibid.*, pp. 401, 402.

⁵⁹. *Ibid.*, pp. 440, 441.

4. *The death of Jesus Christ being granted to be applicable to all men on condition of faith, it is consistent with the goodness and justice of God to supply or deny, either to nations or to individuals, the means of application, and that according to the good pleasure of his own will, not according to the disparity of human wills.*⁶⁰ [Emphasis MS]

5. *The death of Christ, from the special design of God the Father, who from eternity ordained and accepted that sacrifice; and of Christ, who offered it in the fullness of time to God the Father; was destined for some certain persons, whom the Scriptures call the elect, and for them alone, so as to be effectually and infallibly applied to the obtaining of eternal life.*⁶¹ [Emphasis MS]

In explaining what he means by these propositions, Davenant says:

... When we say that this death or this merit is represented in the Holy Scriptures as the universal cause of salvation, we mean, that according to the will of God explained in His Word, *this remedy is proposed indiscriminately to every individual of the human race for salvation, but that it cannot savingly profit any one without a special application.* For an universal cause of salvation, or an universal remedy, includes these two things: first, of itself that it can cure and save all and every individual; secondly, that for the production of this determinate effect in each individual it should require a determinate application.⁶² [Emphasis MS]

He draws a distinction between the applicability of the atonement of Christ and the application of its benefits.

.... we do not affirm that the death of Christ at the moment of his dissolution, was actually *applied* to all and every individual of mankind, nor that after his oblation it was infallibly *to be applied*, but that, according to the appointment of God, it is *applicable* to all. For God hath ordained that it should be applicable to every individual through faith,

^{60.} *Ibid.*, p. 475.

^{61.} *Ibid.*, p. 516.

^{62.} *Ibid.*, p. 341.

but he hath not determined to give that faith to every individual, by which it might be infallibly applied⁶³

While propounding the view that Christ's death was applicable to all, nonetheless Davenant makes it clear that he does not advocate universal salvation. He confines salvation to those "peculiar people who are known only to God, that is to his elect."⁶⁴ He acknowledges that God has not ordained "to give to all men individually this faith, by which they might infallibly obtain salvation."⁶⁵

One might well ask how these various statements from *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* and *On the Controversy* are to be reconciled and understood? The answer appears to lie in Davenant's view of the need for a sincere offer of the gospel. This becomes evident from an illustration which he employs in *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*.

Suppose that all the inhabitants of a certain city laboured under some epidemic and mortal disease; that the king sent to them an eminent physician furnished with a most efficacious medicine, and caused it to be publicly proclaimed, that all should be cured who were willing to make use of this medicine. Doubtless we might truly say of this king, that he so loved that city, as to send his own most skillful physician to it; that all who were willing to attend to this advice, and take his medicine, should not die, but recover to their former health. But if any should object that this physician was sent only to those who follow his prescriptions, and that his medicine was applicable by the appointment of the king only to those who were willing to take it, *he would in reality not only make the beneficence of the king appear less illustrious, but affirm what was evidently false.*⁶⁶ [Emphasis MS]

Davenant reasons in this way. The death of Christ upon the cross was for all men, though His death was not efficacious for all. In the case

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 364.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

of those who were predestinated from eternity, Christ's death assured them of eternal life. For those not predestined to life, Christ's death did not secure for them eternal life, but it did open up to them the window of opportunity to attain unto eternal life. Davenant's motivation for this approach lies in his understanding of those portions of the Scriptures which appear to speak of the offer of salvation to all men. In a desire to remove what he perceived to be insincerity on God's part, Davenant considered it necessary to enable all to attain unto salvation, if they will only believe. For God to be sincere, all must have the opportunity of salvation. Hence, the need for a universal atonement. Consistent with this view, Davenant, like many today, wished to proclaim the well-meant gospel offer.

Shew me an individual of the human race to whom the minister of the gospel may not truly say: God hath so loved thee, that he gave his only begotten Son, that if thou shouldest believe in him, thou shalt not perish but have everlasting life.⁶⁷

One interesting feature of Davenant's writings is that he never satisfactorily explains how a man who is totally depraved can believe on Jesus Christ without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. That question is never satisfactorily addressed. Davenant seems content simply to be able to assert that such a possibility exists, and thereby his conscience is appeased.

... to be continued.

⁶⁷. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

Book Reviews

On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, by Gerhard O. Forde. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997. xiv + 121 pages. \$20 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

Lutheran theologian Gerhard O. Forde gives a brief commentary on the 28 theological theses that Luther presented and defended at the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518. This book is the only complete analysis of these theses currently available. Forde's commentary is, with the exception of the criticism of the "third use of the law" (pp. 108, 109), faithful to the theology of Luther, indeed, remarkably so.

In addition to the commentary, the work is valuable simply in that it makes available Luther's 28 marvelous doctrinal propositions, in full.

Inasmuch as the subject of Luther's theses was the defense of the theology of the cross against the theology of glory, this book opens up the heart of the theology of Martin Luther. Since the heart of Luther's theology was the the-

ology of the Reformation, the book opens up the theology of the Reformation. It does so in a brief, clear, and polemical fashion.

The Heidelberg Disputation was convened on April 26, 1518, a mere six months after Luther's posting of the 95 theses. The Disputation was a direct result of the posting of the 95 theses. The pope had instructed the head of Luther's Augustinian order to silence the monk. vonStaupitz rather asked Luther to acquaint the Augustinians with his new, evangelical theology by means of a disputation on certain theses which Luther was to draw up.

Luther came to the meeting with 28 theological and 12 philosophical theses, or propositions. Each of the theological theses was followed by a brief explanation and defense. To the theses, Luther appended an "explanation" of the question, "Is the will of man outside the state of grace free or rather in bondage and captive?" This amounted to an important treatment of the fundamental theological issue of the freedom or bondage of the will of the natural man. The complete text of the theological and philosophical theses, of

Luther's own explanation of the theological theses, and of the appendix on the bondage of the will is found in *Luther's Works*, vol. 31, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), pp. 39-70.

It was at the Heidelberg Disputation that Martin Bucer was won to the cause of the Reformation, and captivated by Luther.

Gerhard Forde comments on the theological theses. These theses set forth Luther's beliefs concerning sin, the bondage of the human will, the inability of the unsaved man outside of Christ to perform any good work, and salvation by grace alone in the cross of Christ.

The theses, therefore, present the gospel.

In these theses, Luther spoke explicitly of the "theology of the cross," which he explicitly contrasted with the "theology of glory." Thesis 21 reads: "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." The theology of the cross is the biblical gospel of God's salvation of dead sinners out of mere grace only through the suffering and death of the cross of Jesus Christ. The theology of the cross not only rules out, but also curses all human worth, will, and working that

would accomplish or account for the salvation of sinners, in whole or in part. Thesis 16 reads: "The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."

In radical contrast and opposition, the theology of glory is the corruption of the biblical gospel, consisting of attributing to man some "little bit" (to use Forde's description) of cooperation with God in salvation. The glory that the theology of glory is concerned to preserve and promote is the natural glory of man. The theologians of glory are offended by the cross' exposure of man as utterly helpless in his own salvation and utterly hostile to the God who saves him. The theology of (man's) glory is pitted against the theology of (God's) grace.

In an incisive analysis of the theology of glory and its workings, Forde writes:

A theology of glory ... operates on the assumption that what we need is optimistic encouragement, some flattery, some positive thinking, some support to build our self-esteem. Theologically speaking it operates on the assumption that we are not seriously addicted to sin, and that our improvement is both necessary and possible.

We need a little boost in our desire to do good works. Of course our theologian of glory may well grant that we need the help of grace. The only dispute, usually, will be about the degree of grace needed. If we are a "liberal," we will opt for less grace and tend to define it as some kind of moral persuasion or spiritual encouragement. If we are more "conservative" and speak even of the depth of human sin, we will tend to escalate the degree of grace needed to the utmost. *But the hallmark of a theology of glory is that it will always consider grace as something of a supplement to whatever is left of human will and power. It will always, in the end, hold out for some free will* (p. 16; emphasis added).

Luther opposed the characteristic Roman Catholic form of the theology of glory: "Do what is in you, and God will reward you with grace and salvation." Basic to Rome's theology of glory was (and is) their doctrine of the freedom of the human will: the sinner has of himself the ability to choose God and salvation. Against the Roman Catholic theology of glory, therefore, Luther (in 1518!) laid down Thesis 13: "Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do,

it commits a mortal sin."

Forde comments on Thesis 13:

This thesis was perhaps the most offensive of all to the papal party in Luther's day. That is indicated by the fact that it was the only one from this Disputation actually attacked in the bull "*Exurge Domine*" threatening Luther with excommunication. Luther's reply to the bull indicates how important he considered this thesis to be. He said it was "the highest and most important issue of our cause" (p. 53).

Central to Luther's theology of the cross was justification by faith alone. Luther expressed this doctrine in Thesis 25: "He is not righteous who works much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ."

Very definitely and prominently "looming in the background," as Forde puts it, "always is the troublesome question of predestination." In its repudiation of free will, Forde points out, the theology of the cross unmistakably proclaims that "we are saved by divine election." "The cross itself is the evidence that we did not choose him but that he, nevertheless, chose us (John 15:16)" (pp. 50, 51).

Against the truth of predestination, which is fundamental to the theology of the cross, Forde notes,

the protest is always raised, "We aren't puppets, are we? If everything happens by divine will, how can we be held responsible? We just can't accept such a God! There *must* be some freedom of choice!"

This is always the protest *by the theologian of glory*. Thus he identifies himself. He is flushed from his cover by the theology of the cross. As Forde observes,

the point is that this kind of protest is precisely the proof of the pudding. It is evidence of theologians of glory at work defending themselves to the end. They actually admit that they cannot and will not "will" God to be God (p. 51).

Forde calls attention to the fact that, although some translations of the theses that Luther argued at the Heidelberg Disputation speak of the "*theology of the cross*" and the "*theology of glory*," Luther actually spoke of the "*theologian of the cross*" and the "*theologian of glory*." Luther was referring to the church's preachers and professors. He meant to stress

the responsibility of the church's teachers.

In light of this, it is fitting to note that theologians of the cross are rare today, exceedingly rare. A theologian of the cross, according to Luther in Theses 9 and 10, judges all works done "without Christ" as "dead" and as "mortal sin." In his own defense of the theology of the cross, Luther condemned as sin, and nothing but sin, every work done by unbelievers:

"Every one who commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). How is it possible that a slave of the devil and a captive of the sin he serves can do anything else but sin? How can he do a work of light who is in darkness? How can he do the word of a wise man who is a fool? How can he do the work of a healthy person who is ill? ... Therefore all things which he does are works of the devil, works of sin, works of darkness, works of folly.... Everything that does not proceed from faith is a mortal and damnable sin (*Luther's Works*, vol. 31, pp. 65, 67).

This exposes the many theologians who approve and laud the works of unbelievers as good and righteous. Outside of Christ, according to them, is something, even much, that is not killed, accused,

judged, and condemned by the law of God, contrary to the confession of Luther in Thesis 23.

Then there are the Protestant preachers, missionaries, and professors who openly hold with Rome in adorning the sinner with a glorious free will and in making this free will decisive in the sinner's salvation.

"So to defend themselves," says Forde,

theologians of glory are always driven to claim at least some freedom of choice and to play theological games, bargaining for little bits. In one way or another the claim is made that the will must have at least a small part to play (pp. 49, 10).

The theological game that many play today, *exactly as in Luther's day*, is to concede that "without grace the will (can) do nothing to merit eternal salvation" and to acknowledge that we are saved by grace. But immediately they add that "the will must at least desire and prepare for grace" (p. 50).

In his appendix to the theses that he brought to Heidelberg in 1518, an appendix that proved that "the will of man outside the state of grace" is "in bondage and captive," Luther himself passed a devastating judgment upon the theology—the "gospel," the teaching,

the message—of the preachers who make the grace of God depend on anything at all in the sinner, particularly the sinner's will:

Such teachers attribute nothing to the grace of God except a certain embellishment of our works, not that it may heal the sick but adorn the strong. We can do works, but without embellishment. Thus grace is the most despised thing and a gift which is not necessary for us, but exists only because of the will and the intention of the one who demands it, as they say (*Luther's Works*, vol. 31, pp. 67, 68).

Exclaimed Luther, in the next line: "What Christian will stand for such blasphemy?"

In very little Protestant, or even Reformed, preaching today is predestination "looming in the background," as, according to Gerhard Forde, will always be the case when the theology of the cross is proclaimed. On the contrary, as soon as one shows that he takes divine predestination seriously as the source and foundation of all salvation, he is buried in protests, objections, and charges: "You make men puppets! You make God the author of sin! You deny human responsibility! Hyper-Calvinist!"

And how many today would

risk splitting the church and plunging the world into uproar over the doctrines of total depravity, the bondage of the will, justification by faith alone, and eternal predestination?

As little favor as Luther's theology finds with the theologians today, so little favor does his philosophy find with the Christian philosophers of the present day. The first of his philosophical theses at Heidelberg was, "He who wishes to philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ." The second was, "... no person philosophizes well unless he is a fool, that is, a Christian." ■

New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity. Volume 8: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1884-1885. Edited by S. R. Llewelyn. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997. 202 pages. \$35.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Russell Dykstra.]

As the complete title indicates, this is volume eight of a series. It is produced by the Ancient History Documentary Research Centre at Macquarie University in Australia. Eerdmans has recently

added these volumes to the vast offering of books it publishes and distributes.

The title promises documents that illustrate early Christianity. Although it is not clear exactly what it means that documents *illustrate* early Christianity, I expected documents that had to do with the Christian faith and the history of the early church. However, this is not what I found.

The description of the series (found on the back cover of this volume) more accurately describes its content. It states:

The New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity series seeks to keep New Testament and early church researchers, teachers, and students abreast of emerging documentary evidence by reproducing and reviewing recently published Greek inscriptions and papyri that illumine the context in which the Christian church developed.... [T]hese volumes serve to broaden the context of biblical studies and other related fields and provide a better understanding of the historical and social milieus of early Christianity.

In other words, these documents are intended (again, according to the cover) "to illustrate various aspects of life in the Graeco-

Roman world, including such topics as slavery, taxation, public courtesies and convention, and Judaica."

Accordingly, most of the documents included are secular in nature, as e.g., public notices of runaway slaves, prescripts and addresses found in ancient letters, and documents listing the taxes placed on donkeys. A few are related to the church, as e.g., a study of documents headed by a Christian symbol (the Greek letters $\chi\mu\gamma$) and a Hebrew congregational prayer from Egypt.

S. R. Llewelyn, the editor of this as well as volumes 6 and 7, is a research fellow in history at Macquarie University. Llewelyn's careful scholarship is evident throughout. He describes the source and the condition of the original. He provides the original text and indicates where the text is not clear and/or complete. Any editorial additions are noted.

Llewelyn brings together the scholars' opinions on each document and attempts to show its significance. When possible, he connects the document to biblical text or to practices of the church revealed in Scripture. An example of the link to biblical text is on the document containing a Hebrew congregational prayer from Egypt. However, most of the documents

have little or no direct bearing on the biblical text or narrative. It should be noted also that the documents are very short, containing little in the way of a clear and significant presentation of life in the Graeco-Roman world. Most of the information about this era is the result of research on the times and documents pieced together by Llewelyn.

For these reasons, while the book contains some fascinating snippets of history, it has little value for the exegete of the Scriptures. On the other hand, the church historian may find this series more valuable for researching narrowly defined topics in great detail. ■

A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism, by Caspar Olevianus. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995. Pp. xlii + 132. \$17.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

A Firm Foundation is Caspar Olevianus' commentary, in question and answer form, on the Apostles' Creed. Because Olevianus in this catechetical commentary followed closely the Heidelberg Catechism's treatment of the Apostles' Creed, the work is also a kind of commentary on this im-

portant section of the Heidelberg Catechism. In a "general introduction" to *A Firm Foundation*, Lyle D. Bierma, translator and editor of the book, contends that Olevianus had a greater hand in writing the Heidelberg Catechism than recent scholarship supposes. This would make *A Firm Foundation* the first commentary on a large section of the Heidelberg Catechism by one who helped to draw up this Catechism. Olevianus wrote *A Firm Foundation* in 1567.

This is the first publication of Olevianus' book in English. In his foreword, Richard A. Muller notes that this volume is "the first translation and, indeed, the first modern edition (to my knowledge) of any work of Olevianus" (p. x).

Included in the "general introduction" are a brief account of the life and work of Olevianus, a helpful analysis of the relationship of *A Firm Foundation* to the Heidelberg Catechism, and a description of the theological significance of *A Firm Foundation*.

Bierma points to the significance of the work as an early development of covenant theology. The covenant of grace unifies Olevianus' explanation of the Apostles' Creed. Since the Apostles' Creed is the summary of the whole of the Christian faith, it is evident that for Olevianus the

truth of the covenant is central to all the doctrines of Scripture.

FF (*A Firm Foundation*—DJE) marks the beginning of the first effort in the history of Reformed theology to employ the covenant idea as a unifying theological principle over a lifetime of theological reflection and writing (p. xxix).

In this connection Bierma calls attention to "the close relationship between covenant and predestination" in Olevianus. For Olevianus

the covenant of grace "flows out of the fountain" of God's gracious election in Christ. Covenant and election are different links in the same "golden chain" of salvation described in Romans 8.... Olevianus integrates covenant and election in such a way that the former, by its very definition as reconciliation with God through justification and renewal, is viewed as part of the unfolding of God's decree of predestination (p. xxx).

Bierma himself argues that this characteristic of early Reformed theology refutes the theory of some contemporary theologians that "early Reformed covenant theology ... (was) an attempt to mol-

lify a rigid double predestinarianism in Calvinist orthodoxy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" (p. xxx). The close relationship between election and covenant in Olevianus, pointed out by Bierma, also refutes those today who mightily exert themselves virtually to sever covenant from election. According to Bierma, Olevianus taught that "God's gracious covenant (is) with the elect" (p. xxix).

That Olevianus viewed the covenant of grace as the framework of all the doctrines of the gospel is evident already in Q. 4 of *A Firm Foundation*: "Why is the redemption or reconciliation of humanity with God presented to us in the form of a covenant, indeed a covenant of grace?" The source of the covenant in eternal election is clearly indicated in Olevianus' explanation of that section of the Creed that confesses the church's faith in Jesus Christ. In Q. 71 Olevianus stated that

the basis and foundation of the royal priesthood of Christ, and thus of the eternal covenant between God and humanity, is contained in this article of the person of Christ.... This is, in God's decree, the beginning and cornerstone of our salvation (pp. 50, 51).

In Q. 73 Olevianus taught that "the Mediator of the covenant" must be God and man "because He had received a command from the Father that required someone who was almighty to carry it out. The command was that He should save all the elect by His merit and power" (p. 54).

The centrality of the covenant for Olevianus did not mean that covenant swallows up all else. The exposition of the twelve articles of faith is a careful, rich explanation of all that is necessary for a Christian to believe. Particularly interesting are his emphasis on, defense of, and grand treatment of providence; his teaching of eternal justification ("their sins have been pardoned from eternity"—p. 9); his assertion that the reigning Christ always keeps His church "under the cross and all sorts of enemy zealotry to curb the remaining sin in them" (p. 81); and his insistence, oft repeated, that salvation is "unconditional."

Ministers who preach the Heidelberg Catechism will want to read this work in preparation for preaching on the Lord's Days explaining the Apostles' Creed. Reformed believers will benefit from the instruction in the faith by this excellent and authoritative teacher.

Especially edifying and of the greatest importance is

Olevianus' teaching on the assurance of salvation in the face of the devil's temptations of believers to doubt (pp. 112-124). It is evident that for the Reformers assurance is an integral, essential element of faith itself. Further, it is evident that it is Reformed to comfort even the weakest believer with the certainty that he possesses genuine, saving faith. To work at instilling doubt concerning the reality of faith with pernicious questions, "Is your 'feeling' genuine? Have you had a remarkable experience? When you scrutinize your faith, are you sure that it is real?" is for a church or a minister to ally itself or himself with the Evil One; indeed, it is to give itself or himself to the Evil One as his willing agent. No less destructive to assurance is the false doctrine that one can have a desire for Christ without being a true believer.

176 Q. But what if the Evil One were to say, "This all applies only to believers, but your faith is much too weak"?

A. I would respond to that by saying that whoever desires from the heart to believe is in fact a believer. Christ says in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Ultimately the assurance of the believer is certainty of his own personal election:

Whoever, then, is a believer is also elect, for the Scriptures testify that each and every true believer has been elected from eternity unto eternal life (1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:28, 30; Eph. 1:11, 13). Therefore, when you are in the throes of despair about whether you are elect, you must not let your thoughts try to scale the heights of God's decree. You must rather hold on to the Word, which promises that all believers have been elected by grace unto eternal life, and that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are believers.... And if we have faith, then we are also elect, for faith is given to none but God's elect (Rom. 8) (p. 122).

A comparison of Bierma's English translation of Olevianus' *Vester Grundt* with the earlier Dutch translation, *De Vaste Grond* (Urk: De Vuurtoren, 1980), reveals that the first page in the Dutch translation is omitted from the English version. The Dutch edition begins with the question, "In what does the salvation of man consist?" The answer is, "In this, that he is united with God, as the only fountain of all good, and of eternal salvation, and has fellow-

ship with Him ...”(my translation of the Dutch—DJE). Inasmuch as the theme of Olevianus’ exposition is the covenant, this would indicate that Olevianus saw the covenant of grace as fellowship with God.

The book is the first in an important series of works on Reformation and post-Reformation orthodoxy published by Baker. The series is entitled, “Texts and Studies in Reformation & Post-Reformation Protestant Thought.” The general editor is Richard A. Muller. ■

The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius, by John Calvin. Ed. A. N. S. Lane. Tr. G. I. Davies. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996. Pp. xxxix + 264. \$17.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

The second in the series of Baker publications, “Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought,” is this defense by John Calvin of the Reformation’s doctrine of the bondage of the will against Pighius. Surprisingly, this is the first appearance of Calvin’s important work on the bound will and sovereign grace in English.

In 1542 the Dutch Roman Catholic theologian Albert Pighius responded to the 1539 edition of Calvin’s *Institutes* with a violent attack on both Calvin’s doctrine of the bondage of the will and Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. The title of Pighius’ work was *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace*. Whatever one may think of Pighius, he saw the issue. In 1543 Calvin responded to Pighius’ attack on the bound will with *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. Calvin did not get around to responding to Pighius’ attack on predestination until 1552. Then, aroused by Jerome Bolsec, Calvin wrote his great defense of predestination, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*. In it, he refuted Pighius, by then long dead.

The manner of Calvin’s treatment of his subject in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* makes for tedious reading at times. He follows the arguments of Pighius closely, responding point by point. Since Pighius had appealed to the church fathers, Calvin on his part draws heavily from the fathers, especially Augustine, in defense of the bound will.

But the subject is fundamental to the Reformation’s confession of the gospel of salvation by grace alone. Just as Erasmus (an-

other Dutchman!) had done earlier, against Luther, Pighius had affirmed the Roman Catholic heresy of the ability of the will of the natural man to choose the grace of God, which, according to Pighius, is offered by God to all alike. Upon this choice, for Pighius and the Roman Catholic Church, depends the salvation of the sinner.

Calvin taught a "bound will," which he sharply distinguished from a "coerced will." He defined the bound will as "one which because of its corruptness is held captive under the authority of evil desires, so that it can choose nothing but evil, even if it does so of its own accord and gladly, without being driven by any external impulse" (p. 69). The salvation of the sinner, therefore, is the work of God alone. Faith is a gift. Grace is not offered indiscriminately and ineffectually to all, but is the effectual power of God to the elect only. Both Pighius and Calvin knew well the intimate relation between the doctrine of the bound will and the doctrine of predestination.

The doctrine of free will, in the sense of man's ability by nature to choose God, Calvin rightly saw as the overthrow of the biblical gospel of grace. Significantly, Calvin appealed against Pighius to Romans 9:16. This accounts for

Calvin's vehement denunciation of the false teaching. Pighius' doctrine is "in large part an undiluted expression of Pelagian ungodliness" (p. 104). In Pighius' teaching "giving man first place," while yielding "God second," we have "Pelagius . . . vomiting his profanities to the skies at full strength" (p. 217). Luther had passed the same judgment upon the doctrine of the free will in his *Bondage of the Will*.

The publication of Calvin's fullest treatment of the bondage of the will and the related doctrines of grace serves our time well. It sets forth the basic issue between genuine Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Most "evangelicals" are exposed as lined up solidly on Rome's side of the divide. "Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together" should surprise no one.

The book speaks powerfully to developments in the Reformed churches. Against Pighius' argument for free will in terms of good works, Calvin responded that the "worth of good works depends not on the act itself but on perfect love for God." Therefore, "a work will not be righteous and pure unless it proceeds from a perfect love for God" (p. 27). Being completely evil, the natural man can do nothing but evil:

I say that man thinks, chooses, wills, attempts, and does nothing except evil because of that corruption which has taken the whole of the human soul under its control. And it is in this sense that I say that whatever is from us needs to be destroyed and renewed (p. 213).

The apostasy of the Reformed churches widely from the orthodoxy of the Reformation, with fatal consequences for the truth of the bound will and sovereign grace, is glaringly evident in the insistence that the ungodly are able to perform good works.

Calvin repeatedly criticized Pighius' doctrine that grace is "offered indiscriminately to all" (see pp. 188; 196-199; 217). Indeed, for Calvin this was the root of Pighius' errors:

What then is the reason why he rushes headlong, as if with his eyes shut, into such great absurdity? It is of course just this,

that once he has conceived the idea in his mind that the grace of God is offered equally to all, provided that they show themselves to be worthy of it, he is held prisoner by this idea, so that he is incapable of further perception or judgment (p. 198).

Today the Pighian doctrine of an indiscriminate offer of grace to all alike reigns supreme in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, advertised and defended by nearly all as impeccable Reformation orthodoxy. To maintain particular, effectual grace in the preaching of the gospel is to invite summary excommunication from the fellowship of Calvinists: "hyper-Calvinist!"

May the book have wide circulation among Protestants. May God thus still use Calvin himself—the genuine Calvin—to open the eyes especially of the Reformed.

But why did Calvin dedicate the book to Melancthon? ■

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