

[Picture omitted:]

WILHELMUS à BRAKEL, Thess F.

(AD 1635-1711)

Minister of the Gospel in Rotterdam

THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONABLE SERVICE

in which Divine Truths concerning the

COVENANT OF GRACE

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

as well as

The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments

by

WILHELMUS à BRAKEL, Th. F.

Minister of the Gospel in Rotterdam

Volume 3 of 4

Translated by Bartel Elshout

Edited by Joel R. Beeke

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Reformation Heritage Books
2919 Leonard St., NE
Grand Rapids, MI 4925
616-977-0599/Fax 616-977-0889/e-mail jrbeeke@aol.com
website: www.heritagebooks.org

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

This translation is based on the third edition of the original Dutch work entitled *Redelijke Godsdienst* published by D. Bolle, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

The Christian's Reasonable Service, Volume 3
ISBN 1-877611-88-3

Copyright © 1992

Contents—Volume 3

Soteriology: *The Doctrine of Salvation* (cont.)

44. Sanctification and Holiness	###3
The Infinitives “To Sanctify” and “To Hallow” Defined	###3
The Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification	###3
Sanctification: The Efficacious Operation of God in the Elect	###4
Sanctification and its Relationship to the Old and New Man in the Believer	###6
The Functioning of the Old Man in the Believer	###9
The Mortification of the Old Man	###11
The Quickening of the New Man	###14
The Fruit of Sanctification: Holiness	###16
The Virtues Issuing Forth from Holiness	###19
The Three Requisites of true Holiness	###20
Exhortation to Strive for Holiness	###23
The Rich Promises of Scripture in Reference to a holy Life	###31
45. The Law of God: General Considerations	###35
The Giver of the Law	###36
The Manner in Which the Law Was Given	###38
The Law of God and its Relationship to the Covenant of Grace	###40
The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not a Covenant of Works	###43
The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not the Covenant of Grace	###45
The Covenant Made at Horeb: Not a Mixture of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace	###50
The Law of the Ten Commandments: Of Eternal Duration and Binding to the New Testament Believer	###52
The Eternal Duration of the Law of the Ten Commandments	###55
The Law of Christ is Equivalent to the Law of the Ten Commandments	###58
The Moral Law: The Rule of Life for New Testament Believers	###59
Christ: The End of the Law and not the Abrogation of the Law	###64
The Law of the Ten Commandments: A Perfect and Complete Rule	###68
Perfect Compliance with the Law not Attainable in this Life	###75
Heaven: Not Merited by good Works but by the Finished Work of Christ	###78
Final Exhortation to Observe the Law Diligently as a Rule of Life	###81
46. The First Commandment	###84
God's Gift of the Law to Man: The Manifestation of His Character	###84
Guidelines to Be Observed in Ascertaining the Meaning of the Law	###85
The Two Tables of the Law	###86
The Preamble of the Law	###88
The Exposition of the First Commandment	###89
Atheism Forbidden	###90

Idolatry Forbidden	###90
The Worship of Angels and Deceased Saints Denounced	###91
Witchcraft Forbidden	###98
Fortune-telling Forbidden	###99
Superstition Forbidden	###100
The Virtues Enjoined in the First Commandment	###100
47. The Second Commandment	###105
The Content of the Second Commandment	###105
The Incentives Conjoined to this Commandment	###106
The Sins Prohibited	###108
The Virtues Enjoined	###116
48. The Third Commandment	###119
The Focus of this Commandment: The Name of the Lord	###119
The Sins Prohibited	###120
Games of Chance	###124
Public Lotteries	###126
The Virtues Enjoined	###128
The Oath	###129
The Oath: Lawful for Christians	###134
The Need for Self-Examination due to the Solemnity of the Oath	###135
49. The Fourth Commandment	###139
The Basic Contents of this Commandment	###139
The Observance of the Sabbath	###140
The Sins Prohibited	###143
The Virtues Enjoined	###145
Additional Incentives for a Proper Observance of the Sabbath	###147
The Fourth Commandment: Ceremonial or Moral in Nature?	###149
The Sabbath, Having Been Instituted Prior to the Fall, Is not Ceremonial	###152
The Sabbath Is not Ceremonial: Its Observance Is Regulated by the Moral Law	###158
The Eternal Duration of the Moral Law and thus of the Fourth Commandment	###159
The Observance of the Sabbath to Continue After the Abrogation of the Ceremonial Laws	###161
The Observance of the Sabbath: Practiced by Christ, the Apostles, and the Early Church	###162
Objection #1: The Sabbath Does not Issue Forth from the Character of God	###164
Objection #2: The Sabbath Is Part of the Ceremonial Law	###167
Objection #3: The Sabbath Was Abolished by Christ	###169
Objection #4: The Sabbath Is Detrimental to the Gospel	###171
Objection #5: The Sabbath Is Typical of the New Testament Dispensation	###176
Objection #6: The Sabbath Is to Be Observed on the Seventh Day Following Six Workdays	###178
Objection #7: The Sabbath Is a Ceremony Typifying Spiritual Worship	###182
50. The Fifth Commandment	###185

The Full Scope of the Words “Father” and “Mother”	###185
The Virtues to Which Superiors Are Enjoined	###187
The Virtues Enjoined of Subordinates	###187
The Sins Prohibited	###189
The Incentive Conjoined to this Commandment	###191
Exhortation to Superiors	###192
Exhortation to Children and Subordinates	###192
Final Incentives Given for Obedience	###193
51. The Sixth Commandment	###195
All Homicide not Forbidden	###195
The Sins Forbidden	###197
The Virtues Enjoined	###202
52. The Seventh Commandment	###205
Marriage: Divinely Instituted	###205
The Sins Prohibited	###206
The Abominable Nature of this Sin and the Special Judgments Which God Executes upon it	###210
The Virtues Enjoined	###212
Exhortation to Strive for Purity of Heart	###212
53. The Eighth Commandment	###215
The Sins Prohibited	###215
The Means Whereby Theft Is Committed	###219
The Various Manners in Which Theft Is Committed	###221
The Cause of Theft	###223
The Virtues Enjoined	###223
Exhortation to Self-examination	###224
54. The Ninth Commandment	###227
The Sins Prohibited	###227
The Virtues Enjoined	###233
Final Arguments for Observing this Commandment	###234
55. The Tenth Commandment	###237
Man Created with Desire for God	###237
Refutation of the Notion that Covetousness Is no Sin	###238
The Sins Prohibited	###239
The Virtues Enjoined	###242
56. The Glorification of God	###243
Virtue: Its Nature and Goal	###243
God Glorifies Himself in the Works of Nature and Grace	###244
The Glorification of God	###245

The Manner in Which God Is Glorified	###247
Man's Grievous Failure to Glorify God	###249
The Serious Consequences of not Glorifying God	###252
The Shortcomings of God's Children in Glorifying God	###254
Exhortation to Glorify God	###255
The Spiritual Advantages of Glorifying God	###258
Exhortation to Persevere in Endeavoring to Glorify God	###260
57. Love Toward God	###263
Love Toward God Defined	###264
The Deeds Whereby Love Toward God Is Manifested	###266
Indications of the Absence of Love Toward God	###268
The Wretched Condition of Those who Do not Love God	###270
Believers Stirred up to Love Toward God	###272
Believers to Abstain from that Which Hinders an Increase in Love	###275
Counsel for the Increase in Love Toward God	###276
58. Love Toward Jesus Christ	###277
Jesus Christ: The Object of Love Revealed in the Gospel	###277
The Grievous Sin of Being Acquainted with Jesus and yet not Loving Him	###277
The Wretched Condition of Those who Do not Love Jesus	###279
Impediments to an Assurance of a Love for Jesus	###280
Marks of Love for Jesus	###282
The Blessedness of Those who Love Jesus	###284
Exhortations to Increase in Love Toward Jesus	###285
Guards Against all that Impedes the Exercise of Love Toward Jesus	###288
Exhortation to Stir up Love Toward Jesus	###290
59. The Fear of God	###291
The Word Fear Defined	###291
Two Kinds of Fear: Slavish and Filial Fear	###292
The Definition and Nature of Filial Fear	###293
Exhortation with the Intent to Convict Those Who Do Not Fear God	###295
The Serious Consequences of Being Void of the Fear of God	###296
The Fear of God in Believers	###297
Believers Rebuked	###298
Incentives for the Fear of God	###300
Blessings Promised to Those who Fear God	###301
60. Obedience Toward God	###303
The Object and Subjects of Obedience	###303
The Nature, Goal, and Manner of Obedience	###304
A Convicting Question: Are We Obedient Toward God?	###307
A Reprimand for the Disobedient	###308

A Reprimand for God's Children	###311
An Exhortation to Obedience	###313
61. Hope in God	###317
The Nature of Hope	###318
The Objects of Hope	###321
The Cause and Means of the Exercise of Hope	###322
Patience: The Adjunct and Result of Hope	###323
A Call to Serious Self-Examination	###324
The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted	###326
62. Spiritual Strength or Courage	###331
The Essence of Spiritual Strength	###333
The Origin of Spiritual Strength	###334
The Effects of Spiritual Courage	###336
The Unconverted: Void of Spiritual Valor and Courage	###338
The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Strength	###340
Exhortation to Be Courageous	###341
God's Promises for Courageous Warriors	###345
Final Directions for this Warfare	###346
63. The Profession of Christ and His Truth	###349
Profession of the Truth Is in Word and Deed	###351
The Qualities of an Unwavering Witness of the Truth	###352
The Purpose of Profession of the Truth	###356
God Requires Profession of the Truth	###357
Believers Exhorted to Confess Jesus Boldly	###358
A Letter of Exhortation to Be Steadfast in the Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His truth in Time of Persecution and Martyrdom	###359
Final Exhortation to Believers	###376
64. Contentment	###379
The Object of Contentment	###380
The Nature of Contentment	###381
The Foundation of Contentment	###382
The Effects or Fruits of Contentment	###383
Discontentment: A Characteristic of the Unconverted	###384
The Godly: Also Subject to Discontentment	###386
The Godly Exhorted not to Be Fretful	###387
Exhortation to Strive for Contentment	###390
The Blessed Benefits Issuing Forth from Contentment	###393
Guidelines for Learning how to Be Content	###395
65. Self-denial	###397
Self-denial Defined	###397

What Self-Denial Is not	###399
The Specific Aspects of Self-Denial	###400
The Motivation for Self-Denial: Love for the Will of God	###402
The Objective of Self-Denial: The Glory of God and the Welfare of the Neighbor	###403
The Converted and Unconverted Distinguished	###404
The Need for Self-Examination	###408
Exhortation to Self-Denial	###409
Final Advice for Those who Desire to Deny Self	###412
66. Patience	###414
The Essence or Nature of Patience	###415
The Conviction of the Unconverted	###418
The Impatience of the Godly	###419
Believers Exhorted to Be Patient	###421
67. Uprightness	###427
The Pattern of Uprightness: Truthfulness	###429
God: The Origin of Uprightness	###430
Hypocrisy: The Sin of the Unconverted	###431
True Believers: Upright in Principle	###435
The Necessity of Being Exhorted to Be Upright	###437
The Means to Uprightness	###441
68. Prayer	###443
The Various Forms of Prayer in Scripture	###443
The Nature or Essence of Prayer	###446
Prayer: The Expression of holy Desires	###449
Prayer to Be Offered in the Name of Jesus Christ	###450
The Originator of true Prayer	###452
Prayer Under Consciousness of Committed Sin	###454
The Purpose of Prayer	###455
The Characteristics of true Prayer	###456
Exhortation to Persevere in Prayer	###461
Praying in Faith	###462
The Time of Prayer	###464
Private Devotions	###465
The Place of Prayer	###467
The Physical Gestures Used in Prayer	###467
The Voice in Prayer	###468
Exhortations to Prayer	###468
Mental Obstacles to Prayer	###471
Guidance to Supplicants	###473
God's Answers to Prayer	###477

69. The Lord's Prayer: Explained and Applied	###483
A Rule and Example for our Prayer	###483
The Address: Our Father Which Art in Heaven!	###484
The Three-fold Fatherhood of God	###486
The Use of the Father Name: The Practice of Believers in both Old and New Testaments	###487
The Significance of the Phrase "Which Art in Heaven"	###489
The Address Renders Liberty and Reverence	###491
The Believer's Approach to the Father	###492
The First Petition: Hallowed Be Thy Name	###494
The Objective of this Petition	###494
The Object of this Petition	###497
The Mandated Activity	###497
God Hallows Himself	###499
The Manner in Which Man Hallows	###500
The Implication of Praying, "Hallowed Be thy Name."	###502
The Vain Use of this Petition	###503
The Grave Consequences of not Hallowing God's Name	###504
The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Use of this Petition	###505
70. The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come	###507
The Word "Kingdom" Defined and Expounded	###507
The Origin and Nature of the Kingdom	###510
This Kingdom Redounds to the Glorification of God	###512
This Petition as it Relates to Individuals	###513
This Petition as it Relates to the Church in its Condition	###514
Our Duty to Pray this Petition	###515
The Requisites for Praying this Petition Aright	###516
The vain and Sacrilegious Use of this Petition	###516
Obligations in this Petition	###518
The Duty of the Upright	###520
71. The Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it Is in Heaven	###523
The Subject of this Petition: The Revealed Will of God	###524
The Manner in Which God's Will Is to Be Done	###527
The vain Recitation of this Petition	###529
The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted	###531
Compliance with God's Will During Seasons of Affliction	###533
The holy Obligation to Do God's Will	###536
Final Exhortation	###537
72. The Fourth Petition: Give us this Day our Daily Bread	###539
The Relationship Between Soul and Body	###539
The Position of this Petition	###540
The Matter Requested	###541

The Bread Referred to as Our Bread	###542
This Bread Referred to as Daily Bread	###543
For Whom this Request Is Made	###544
The Manner of Their Request	###545
The Lessons this Petition Teaches	###546
Diligence Taught in this Petition	###548
Concerning Anxiety for the Future	###549
Satisfaction with the Portion the Lord Allots us	###551
This Petition Exhorts to Generosity	###552
God Acknowledged as the Giver	###553
73. The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our Debtors	###555
The Object of this Petition: Our Debts	###556
The Focus of this Petition: The Forgiveness of Guilt	###558
The Requested Action: Forgiveness	###558
Man's Need of a Surety	###561
This Petition: The Believer's Prayer for Paternal Forgiveness	###562
Forgiveness Implied	###562
The Disposition of the Supplicant	###564
Human Forgiveness vs. Divine Forgiveness	###565
A Serious Warning Addressed to the Unconverted	###567
Counsel for Those who Desire to Be Reconciled and Be at Peace with God	###568
74. The Sixth Petition: And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil	###573
The Two-fold Nature of this Petition	###574
The Subject of this Petition: Temptation	###574
God Tempts	###574
Man the Tempter	###575
The World as Tempter	###576
The Devil as Tempter	###577
The Request Relative to Temptation	###578
Trials Sent by God Are of a holy Nature	###579
What Is Implied when the Godly Pray: "Lead Us not into Temptation"	###580
The Second Part of the Petition: But Deliver us from Evil	###581
The Word "Evil" Defined	###581
An Unconverted Person Is not Able to Pray this Petition	###582
The Godly Are not Always in a Frame to Pray this Petition	###583
This Petition Must Be Prayed in all Earnestness	###583
The Bitterness of Succumbing to the Power of Temptation	###584
The Motivation for this Petition	###585
Prayer and Work Must also Be Combined	###585
Guarding Against Temptation	###586
The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer	###587
The Meaning of the Word "Amen"	###588

Soteriology:

The Doctrine of Salvation

(continued)

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Sanctification and Holiness

In the previous volumes we have discussed the meriting of salvation and its application to the elect. In the final two volumes we shall consider the life of the true partakers of the covenant in its particulars and the manner in which it functions. We shall begin with sanctification and holiness.

The Infinitives “To Sanctify” and “To Hallow” Defined

The verbs *sanctify* or *hallow* have several meanings. First, they are sometimes understood comprehensively as referring to *salvation in its entirety*, in which are comprehended regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification (Heb 10:10; 1 Pet 1:2). *Secondly*, they occasionally signify a *reverent acknowledgment of God’s majesty*, essential holiness, and other attributes (1 Pet 3:15). *Thirdly*, they can signify *a separation from common usage unto the service of God*. This can be true 1) as far as time is concerned; God thus sanctified the *seventh* day (Exod 20:11); 2) for matters and objects separated for religious purposes (Exod 40:13 Num 5:10); 3) for persons separated unto the public ministry, such as the *firstborn* (Num 3:13), subsequently the tribe of Levi in their place (Num 3:12, 45), and Aaron and his sons in the priestly office (Exod 40:13). *Fourthly*, it can signify *an accommodating of one’s self to and preparing of one’s self for religious service* (Exod 19:10-11). *Fifthly*, it can signify *separation from the world* and transfer into the church (Deut 7:6; 1 Cor 7:14). *Sixthly*, it can signify *an internal disposition* which harmonizes with the image of God, as well as its external manifestation (Heb 12:14; 2 Cor 7:1). It is the latter which we shall discuss in this chapter.

The Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification

Justification and sanctification always coexist in a believer; where

the one is, the other will also be present. One should entertain no notions about justification if he does not at the same time possess the principle of sanctification. Neither ought he to have any notions that he is a partaker of true sanctification if he is not justified and if he does not earnestly seek this by faith in Christ. They are therefore conjoined: “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification” (1 Cor 1:30); “... but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified” (1 Cor 6:11).

Nevertheless, these two matters are in essence entirely different. First, justification is executed by God as righteous Judge; sanctification is executed by God the Holy Spirit as re-creator. *Secondly*, justification is executed by God toward man as the object; sanctification transpires within man as being the subject. *Thirdly*, justification removes guilt and punishment, and establishes man in a state of felicity; sanctification removes pollution and restores the image of God. *Fourthly*, justification is executed perfectly each time; sanctification always remains imperfect as long as man is upon earth. *Fifthly*, in natural order justification comes *first*, and sanctification follows as proceeding from justification.

Sanctification: The Efficacious Operation of God in the Elect

Sanctification is the efficacious operation of God in elect, called, regenerated, and justified sinners, purifying them by means of the Word from the pollution of sin, transforming them according to the image of God, and—*by virtue of this internal principle of spiritual life—causing them to live according to His will as expressed in the law of the ten commandments.*

We repeat, sanctification is an *efficacious work of God*. God alone is its cause. As little as man can contribute to his regeneration, faith, and justification, so little can he contribute to his sanctification. “... for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The Lord Jesus says this concerning His disciples who already are believers. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do” (Phil 2:13). The apostle demonstrates this in his prayer: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess 5:23); “And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel” (Ezek 37:28). Sometimes it is attributed to the Father: “... to them that are sanctified by God the Father” (Jude 1); sometimes to the Son: “That He might sanctify and cleanse it” (Eph 5:26); sometimes to the Holy Spirit: “... through sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet 1:2); “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith” (Gal 5:22). He is therefore called the “Spirit of holiness” (Rom 1:4).

Even though God does not need any means, He nevertheless

uses the *Word of God* as a means: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:26). It is there that sins are held forth in their abominable nature and spiritual life is revealed in its desirability. Scripture convicts, rebukes, threatens, and judges. It contains exhortations and various inducements, Christ is presented as the Fountain of sanctification, and it contains the promises. All this the Holy Spirit applies to the heart of believers, exercising and activating them unto sanctification—the Word of God being an instrument in the hand of God (apart from which a means cannot be operative). Since ministers preach the Word of God and urgently call to repentance and sanctification, they are also means unto sanctification. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? For we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor 3:5, 9); “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3).

As man is the cause of his actions in natural life—albeit that in his being and motions he is dependent upon God, and functions by means of the preceding, cooperative, and executing power of God—this is likewise true in spiritual life. Believers hate sin, love God, are obedient, and do good works. However, they do this neither on their own nor independently from God; rather, the Holy Spirit, having infused spiritual life in them at regeneration, maintains that life by His continual influence, stirs it up, activates it, and causes it to function in harmony with its spiritual nature—doing so in that order which God has established as far as the functioning of man’s intellect, will, and affections are concerned, as well as the works which proceed from these. Man, being thus moved by the influence of God’s Spirit, moves, sanctifies himself, engages in that activity which his new nature desires and is inclined toward, and does that which he knows to be his duty. Observe this in the following passages: “Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1); “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:15-16).

Those who are sanctified are all the elect and they alone. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4); “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). In them, all things become new; not only the intellect but also the will; not

only the will but also the intellect; not only the intellect and will but also the affections. Thus, not only the inferior faculties of the soul, but also the superior; not only the internal, but also the external deeds; not the external deeds only—as the Socinians would like to have it, not acknowledging the internal dimension—but also the internal faculties, intellect, will, and affections. “... be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2); “... therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:20); “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17); “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). Although all the elect are sanctified—that is, in all things and in all aspects—they are nevertheless not all sanctified in the same measure. There are children, young men, and fathers (1 John 2:13). There are oaks of righteousness, green palm trees, and high cedars, as well as broken reeds and smoking flaxes. He who is weak occasionally becomes strong, and he who is strong occasionally becomes weak—not only as far as manifestation is concerned, but also as far as habitual grace is concerned. Their spiritual life never disappears, however, and they never again come under the dominion of sin, even though they are occasionally captured by sin as by an enemy, and for a time are even held captive. “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand” (Ps 37:24).

The activity or deeds of sanctification have a twofold focus: against sin and unto holiness. In reference to sin it is called: *the putting off the old man* (Eph 4:24); *the mortification of the members which are upon the earth* (Col 3:5); *the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts* (Gal 5:24); *the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh* (Col 2:11); *abstinence from fleshly lusts* (1 Pet 2:11); and *the cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit* (2 Cor 7:1). In reference to holiness it is called: *a putting on the new man* (Eph 4:24); *a being transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Rom 12:2); *being conformed to the image of the Son* (Rom 8:29); and *a travailing until Christ be formed in us* (Gal 4:19).

Sanctification and its Relationship to the Old and New Man in the Believer

The old man is the corruption of the human nature. By reason of the fall man has come into a most abominable and dreadful condition. He is void of the image of God, as well as all light, true love, righteousness, holiness, peace, and true joy. He has within

him the nature of the devil, and is capable of committing all manner of abominations against God and his neighbor. He finds no delight in God, but hates God, all that resembles God, and whatever God commands him. It is his wish that the Holy One of Israel would depart from him. He is indeed satisfied if he can stay away from God, and does not wish to subject himself to God. It is his entire desire to live in sin. If he could eternally live in sin, he would readily let God have heaven. His lusts are his master, directing his intellect, will, and all the members of his body to satisfy them. Thus whatever is in him is wrong and distorted. Man is entirely such prior to his conversion. Scripture refers to this disposition as *the old man*.

It is called *man* because this corruption permeates man in his entirety. It penetrates his intellect, will, affections, and all the members of his body in its motions, both by unbridled passions, as well as the pleasure which the body receives in the commission of sin. These sins are ignited by his lusts, and they in turn ignite his lusts. Thus, both mind and conscience are contaminated and man is abominable, disobedient, and unfit for every good work (Titus 1:15-16). An evil tree brings forth evil fruit, and an evil man brings forth evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart (Matt 12:33, 35). “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt 15:19).

It is called *old man* since its origin is from the time of Adam and is already in man prior to being regenerated. Thus man, prior to his conversion, is nothing but “old man,” that is, corruption. This “old man” is also called: *fleshly lusts* (1 Pet 2:11); *flesh* (Rom 7:23); *law of sin* (Rom 7:23); *the image of the first Adam* (Gen 5:3; 1 Cor 15:49).

By applying the law of opposites it is now evident what the *new man* is: the spiritual propensity, spiritual life, the sanctified nature, and the image of God consisting in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. It is otherwise also referred to as *the inward man* (Rom 7:22); *the hidden man of the heart* (1 Pet 3:4); *God’s workmanship* (Eph 2:10); *a new creature* (2 Cor 5:17); and *the divine nature* (2 Pet 1:4). It is called *man* because it permeates the entire man and penetrates his intellect, will, affections, and all the members of the body in their motions, causing man to function in harmony with this holy nature. It is called *new man* because it is infused in man subsequent to the existence of the old man and transforms him into an entirely different and renewed man.

Although man receives a new nature in regeneration and all things become new in every respect—that is, affecting his intellect, will, affections, and the members of his body—man will

nevertheless not achieve the highest degree of perfection as long as he lives, but everything will always be only in part. The old nature, even though it does not dominate, nevertheless remains in man, retains its own nature, and does not cease to manifest itself at every opportunity. It is the wise will of God to allow the old nature to remain. Hereby the free grace of God will shine forth all the more, as well as His longsuffering and power, preventing the new nature from being extinguished and devoured by the old nature—strong as it may be. Hereby Christ's atonement always remains fresh and precious and the only foundation of our justification and joy. Hereby man remains small in himself and it gives reason for continual battle, upon which the crown is promised. This engenders a longing for heaven and the state of perfection. This is correctly understood by him who, while maintaining the desire and striving for perfection, can presently subject himself to the will of God in this respect and thus keep himself from despondency by way of justification and the hope that once it will be thus.

As water and fire cannot coexist in one vessel, but will strive to expel each other in order to have sole occupancy, so it also is with the old and new man. They both coexist in one and the same regenerated man—not intermittently, as if at one time the one and then the other exists, but they are present simultaneously. They do not each have a different location, as if the one were in the intellect and the other in the will; the one in the soul and the other in the body. Rather, they are intermingled as light and darkness are intermingled at dusk, and as cold and heat in lukewarm water. Being thus intermingled, they strive to expel each other.

This warfare does not transpire in such a fashion that the old man is *first* removed to make room for the new man, similar to an old house *first* having to be removed before a new house can be built in its place. Such is the focus of the discipline in popish monasteries, and by which the *Labadists*—whose entire objective is to imitate the popish mystical writers and their manner of speech—define their piety and thus draw souls from the right way. God has therefore turned all their intentions upside down, and in His wrath has caused them to be confused and to be separated from each other. It is sufficiently evident that this was but their own doings to restrict the old man in some measure (while internally allowing it to remain untouched), and but a natural piety, for they now again intermingle with all sorts of people. They are demonstrating that they have not learned the least self-denial (especially when it comes to esteem and money), excepting those who were

converted prior to joining with them—in them grace remains and still shines forth.

These two natures within a regenerate person generate a continual warfare. If a believer engages himself diligently in this battle, the old nature will decrease more and more, and the new and holy nature will increase more and more in sanctification. To that end we shall present the manner in which both natures function. We shall *first* consider the functioning of the old nature. The old nature is active in a threefold manner: 1) in causing man to commit sin; 2) in causing him to abstain from that which is good; and 3) in contaminating whatever good work it cannot prevent.

The Functioning of the Old Man in the Believer

The old nature stirs up to the commission of sin.

(1) Sometimes it does so by violent assaults. The lusts are so agitated and are stirring so vehemently that there is no time to think upon the fear of God. Even if the fear of the Lord surfaces, the lusts increase so forcefully in strength that any good inclinations are immediately extinguished. Thus, sin is committed before one can think about anything else, the heart being carried about as chaff in the wind.

(2) Sometimes the old nature seeks some rest; to be so intently focused upon God tires the body and the mind, so that it appears impossible to live in such a manner. The old nature, in seeking some rest and relaxation, begins initially to think upon natural things; however, the lusts of the flesh begin to stir, and the thoughts pertaining to natural things become sinful, due to one's ego entering the picture. A person will begin to build castles in the sky, imagining himself to have possessions, to be in a position of prominence, of being honored, and of having riches. Even though he knows that he will never attain to this, he nevertheless entertains himself with such imagery. From this point the old nature proceeds to reflect upon that sin which most readily presents itself—be it immorality, a lust for money, or pride. Being thus drawn away from his steadfastness, he commits sin to the degree that the moment permits, and if the opportunity were not lacking, he would fall into sins which he never thought himself to be capable of. Or, if the opportunity is there, he will fall into sin from which he thought to have been delivered—be it in a natural sense or by grace.

(3) Sometimes the old nature gains in strength due to recklessness. A person will bring himself into situations, knowing from experience that they have repeatedly ensnared him. This can either be solitude, or the company of certain people, yet he is of the

opinion that he will now be able to abstain from the previous sins. In making use of the opportunity, however, he is inclined to it before realizing it, and sin having found an opening must proceed; the sin which is then at hand gains the upper hand. Contact with grease cannot but leave a stain.¹

(4) Sometimes the old nature presents something as being beneficial but conceals its sinfulness. It presents it as a necessity, as being delightful, as being advantageous, or as being honest, etc. Sometimes it is presented as a white lie, as being a necessity (not being able to do business otherwise), as being an honest deed, or as something which would otherwise prevent you from intermingling with people in a civil manner. Sometimes it suggests that one will thereby come into a position, in which he will be able to do more good subsequently—and similar pretenses, which are not advanced in a premeditated manner, but suddenly present themselves at a given opportunity. And thus, man takes more liberty—or at least he does not resist sin as much, and the old nature breaks through, one sin begetting another.

Secondly, the old nature is likewise always engaged in keeping man from that which is good.

(1) There will be no time for one to engage in his godly exercises of praying, reading, singing, and meditation. Therefore these exercises either do not occur at all, or only in a casual manner to satisfy the conscience. It is as if he is rushed, even though he frequently would have the time.

(2) At another time one will postpone the matter, determining to do it, but to do it in a more quiet and composed manner; certain things *first* have to be accomplished. In the meanwhile time slips away or the Spirit has departed, and one does not get to it, or it is void of all spirituality.

(3) Then again the task appears as being exceptionally difficult; one looks up against it, and seeks to avoid and postpone it. Having burdened himself with many difficulties, he approaches the duty as a lazy person and, so to speak, crawls forward. It is too difficult and one is not fit to do it.

(4) Again he thinks that all that he does is in vain, that God does not hear, that one shall not obtain it, and he suggests to himself that he shall not obtain anything in the future anyhow. Our words do not carry any weight with others; we shall be put to shame, and our careful walk will only be construed as hypocrisy.

¹ This is a paraphrase of the Dutch idiom, “Vetjes maken smetjes.”

(5) Or one will try to compromise. The way to heaven is not so narrow as one generally claims. Would all those perish who are not so precise? No! It is not contrary to godliness to have determination, and to be courteous and cheerful. Thus, the old nature will prevent one from making vigorous progress and from carefully following the footsteps of Jesus.

Thirdly, if the old nature cannot keep man away from that which is good, she will endeavor to spoil that which is good.

(1) At one time she will cause the thoughts to wander from one thing to the next.

(2) At another time there will be good thoughts which, however, will not be applicable at the moment. They are only fit to break the resolution toward that good thing which at that moment is to be performed.

(3) Again, ulterior motives and our ego can enter the picture which will hinder a person in his duty, causing him to lose his resolve and the stimulus to be removed; thus the purity of the duty is contaminated.

(4) Then there will be thoughts that all is devoid of the Spirit and but the work of nature—yes, even hypocrisy.

(5) At another time the atheistic heart and unbelief come to the surface, which contaminate the performance of spiritual duty—and instead of being refreshed by the performance of one's duty, there is consternation and abhorrence that he has performed this good duty in such an evil manner. And thus the old nature agitates within.

The Mortification of the Old Man

However, the new nature is not inactive either, but rather opposes the old nature, at one time by mortifying it directly, or at another time by strengthening the new man and becoming increasingly holy—and this is the essential activity of sanctification. We shall *first* discuss the functioning of the new man in mortifying sin, and subsequently, the manner in which the new nature is strengthened.

The Holy Spirit, having infused a new nature at regeneration, preserves it by His continual influence, stirs it up, supports it, and directs it in all its motions. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). This spiritual life, this new nature being thus supported and activated, functions in harmony with its strength (or weakness), and sets itself against the old nature, either to mortify or to expel it. “... if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13); “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of

Christian life, battle of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:16-17).

The new nature opposes the old nature. She does so, first of all, by a *heartfelt mourning* and being grieved that she is so surrounded by sin and is made so polluted and abominable by it; this causes her to abhor herself. It grieves her that she is thereby prevented from living in sweet communion with God, that she continually acts contrary to the will of God, and thus makes herself worthy of the wrath of God. Sin troubles her and as a heavy burden is too heavy for her. How she wishes to be delivered from this abominable monster! With great courage she would cast sin away if she could, but it is too deeply rooted and cleaves too much to her, so that she cries out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (Rom 7:24). All sorrow over other matters is as nothing compared to the evil motions, sorrow, and abominableness of sin. She mourns like a dove and chatters as a swallow; she goes about mournfully and sin can even cause her to be thin in the face. She does not avoid this mourning, but seeks to increase this sorrow and to spiritualize it. She brings herself into the presence of the Holy Spirit as she is and sinks away in shame. There she makes wholehearted confession, weeps, enlarges the sinfulness of sin, grieves, and prays for forgiveness. There she flees to Jesus, receives Him as her ransom, and with that atonement goes to the Father and wrestles until she is justified and becomes conscious of peace. She thus comes into a more upright condition and becomes more fearful of sin. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of” (2 Cor 7:10); “Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better” (Eccles 7:3).

Secondly, the new nature opposes the old nature by *hating sin*. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps 97:10); “I hate vain thoughts ... and I hate every false way” (Ps 119:113, 128). This hatred manifests itself:

(1) By an inward aversion for sin and its pollution—seeing by the light of God’s holiness and His holy will how contradictory and unbecoming sin is—that it is a despising and rejecting of God. This engenders aversion in her. “Abhor that which is evil” (Rom 12:9). As a result she abhors herself. “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

(2) By a felt consternation upon the commission of sin. The heart rate increases, inner peace departs, and restlessness comes in its place. A desire to take revenge upon sin arises in the heart.

“David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt” (1 Sam 24:5); “... neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin” (Ps 38:3); “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!” (2 Cor 7:11).

(3) By a despising of sin, so that one can neither hear nor see it. One neither wants to say a word about it, nor have it mentioned, and if sin arises, one will cast it away as being worthless, doing so as hastily as one shakes fire from his clothing. “... hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

The third method of opposition consists in an *immediate fleeing* from sin. The new nature, when functioning well, is watchful against sin. She robs it of all nourishment and opportunity; she has learned by now to which sin her nature is most inclined and which circumstances will cause sin to arise the most, as well as render it strength. If it is idleness, solitude, or the company of such and such a person, she will abstain therefrom. “I kept myself from mine iniquity” (Ps 18:23); “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov 1:10); “Enter not into the path of the wicked” (Prov 4:14); “Depart from evil” (Ps 34:14).

Fourthly, with great courage she will resist sin when it presents itself and she will endeavor to cast it out. She begins with the heart for she knows that when it is pure within, it will also become pure without. The external abstinence from sin does not count with her, but she desires to pull sin out of the heart with root and branch. She is engaged in mortifying sin (Col 3:5), with crucifying the flesh and all its lusts (Gal 5:24), and she purifies the heart and cleanses the hands (James 4:8). She makes resolution, girds herself for battle, takes courage, and does not wish to yield to sin. She focuses her attention upon the love of God and this urges her on. She unites herself to the fear of God, reflecting upon all the divine warnings and judgments upon both the godly and the ungodly—this being related to specific committed sins against which she now has to do battle. She prays for help and depends on the power of God. She does everything by faith which, relative to this, functions as follows:

(1) She seeks for a promise of God which is applicable to her current condition, such as: “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God” (Deut 30:6); “A new heart also will I give you ... and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek 36:26-27).

(2) She focuses upon such promises, thereupon goes to Christ,

receiving Him unto justification, and in a lively manner determines that all promises—and thus also those—are yea and amen in Christ. In Him she views herself as an heir of the promises that will also be fulfilled to her.

(3) In this manner she engages herself while continually clinging to the promises.

(4) She thus uses all the means which God has prescribed to her.

(5) She is patient as far as the promises are concerned and continues to trust that they will come true for her. She submits herself to the will of God as far as time and measure are concerned and continues to be exercised therewith. She thus progresses and increases in strength, while the strength of sin gradually decreases, even though she cannot always perceive that she is gaining the victory.

The Quickening of the New Man

The second function of the new nature is the strengthening of itself and the increase in holiness. This manifests itself in: 1) love for the will of God, 2) a desire for the performance of duty, and 3) being encouraged in the performance of duty.

First, the new nature is not satisfied to battle sin only, but she wants holiness in its place. As labor and diligence are needful for the one, this is likewise true for the other. She follows after holiness, which particularly manifests itself *in her desire to be united with the will of God*. She focuses upon the will of God as being the will of her Father in Christ. She knows God as being holy, and as the only majestic and sovereign Commander (cf. Isa 55:4). She sees such purity and beauty in the will of God and considers it to be so appropriate, that her will becomes one with God's will, and she becomes completely enamored with it. She earnestly resolves to cause her will to will whatever God wills that she shall will.

(1) If it pleases God to send suffering her way according to either soul or body, she wishes to receive it—it being the will of her Lord. She embraces it, willingly accepts it—even if it is with tearful eyes due to the grievousness which she must endure, since to be without feeling is contrary to the will of God. She humbles herself under the mighty hand of God and neither grumbles, is sorrowful, nor is despondent. If these do arise, she will then say, “Be silent, for that is contrary to the will of God.” Rather, she patiently submits herself, although she knows of no reason why the Lord deals thus with her. She says: “I need not know any reason, for God does not give an account of all His deeds; and should I, a worm, insist that God would give an account of His doings to me? No, it suffices me that this is the will of my Father; I know from the

Word that it is love and that it will work for my good—even if I cannot see how. It will once come to an end and the outcome will be glorious.” Such exercises of bowing her will under the will of God make the soul holy. David was thus exercised in his oppression: “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Ps 39:9); “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because He hath borne it upon him. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies” (Lam 3:28, 31-32); “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:10).

(2) She therefore also embraces the will of God in regard to that which God wills her to do—both physically and spiritually. We read in Scripture, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3). This is also her will. If she serves, she serves “with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:7). If she must abstain from this or do that, she immediately focuses upon the will of God and either abstains from or does something *because* it is His will. “... doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph 6:6). Since she has so much love for the will of God, she also has much love for the commandments and laws of God. “O how love I Thy law! How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in Thy statutes. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end” (Ps 119:97, 103, 14, 16, 111-112).

She thus conducts herself with every act and in every situation, proving “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2). In one word, this is her entire objective and she is very desirous whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord (2 Cor 5:9).

The second deed of the new nature in regard to sanctification is *in the matter and in the duty*. “...Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name” (Neh 1:11). This desire manifests itself in:

- (1) the offering of one’s self to the service of the Lord: “Speak; for Thy servant heareth” (1 Sam 3:10);
- (2) asking what the Lord would have us to do: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do” (Acts 9:6);
- (3) listening to the answer: “I will ... watch to see what He will say unto me” (Hab 2:1);
- (4) a willing readiness to accept the task: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness” (Ps 110:3);

“I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Ps 119:60);

(5) a fervent zeal in executing the task: “... fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11);

(6) a steadfastness in the performance of the duty: “... they, which ... bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

The third deed consists in having *spiritual courage* to break through all obstacles and to be impeded by nothing—regardless of what it may be. If she falls, she arises again; if she is wounded, she goes to the Physician, Christ, and receives His blood as the balm that will readily heal her. From adversities she draws strength, resisting them all the more courageously. She lifts herself up in the ways of the Lord, for she knows that the enemy has already been conquered by the Lord Jesus and that she only has to deal with his death throes. She knows that the enemy will never conquer her and that she will remain the victor and be crowned as victor. It is therefore her happiness to do the right and her joy to engage in battle against her enemies. She thus breaks through. “Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:6-7). Such courageous ones are denominated by the title of “strong ones” or “mighty men”:² “Let the weak say, I am strong” (Joel 3:10). They are characterized as such: “... the Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded” (Zech 10:3, 5). It is thus that the new nature is engaged in sanctification, and this makes it evident how great the difference is between the manner in which the unconverted curb sin, and true sanctification; between the virtuousness of a person without grace, and a person with grace. Oh, that all who are virtuous in a civil and natural manner would be convicted by this!

The Fruit of Sanctification: Holiness

The fruit of the exercise of sanctification is *holiness*. It is impossible for a person to be thus engaged and yet to be without fruit, and

² In the Statenvertaling “held” is used in both Joel 3:10 and Zech 10:5. Its literal translation is “hero”; however, the KJV uses “strong” and “mighty men” respectively in these texts.

it cannot be otherwise but that such a person will become holier and shine forth with holy ornaments.

Holiness is the most beautiful ornament and the most magnificent beauty which can be found in man. “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Ps 93:5); “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness” (Ps 110:3); “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet 3:4). The word *holiness* engenders esteem and reverence as soon as one hears it. Therefore, how glorious and how magnificent is he who is truly holy! Holiness is not just an external matter, nor does it only consist in abstaining from evil and in doing good. Rather, the seat of holiness is the heart. It is because of the holy disposition of the heart that a saint hates and flees all sin without exception, and delights in and exercises all virtues without exception. However, no one can understand rightly (except the person who has such a disposition), what manner of heart disposition this holiness is and the manner in which holy deeds flow forth out of this disposition, just as no virtue can be rightly known except by those who practice it. Since holiness is the image of God, how then can anyone know holiness who does not know God? When God translates His elect into the state of being a child of God, having endowed them with the perfection of their Head and Surety, He likewise truly adorns them with His image. They “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10); “... the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). Thus, holiness is an expression of the purity of God and a conformity with God. “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16).

We shall hold forth a sanctified soul with a higher degree of holiness in order to demonstrate her beauty. Therefore one who is little and weak in grace must not be discouraged when he perceives that he has not progressed this far.

God grants such sanctified souls a wondrous light in the soul (1 Pet 2:9), enlightened eyes of the understanding (Eph 1:18), and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). In this light the soul sees God, His perfections, and among others, His majesty and glory. She perceives that God is worthy in Himself, that all intelligent creatures would find all their delight and joy in Him, express all their love to Him, and submit with all readiness in all things to His will. At the same time, the soul perceives that God has been so good to have

willed something in reference to man—be it that He directs some suffering his way, or that He commands him something. The sanctified soul needs no other reason for subjecting herself and being obedient than that it be the will of God. She perceives, however, that the law is holy, and that the commandment is holy, righteous, and good (Rom 8:12). Yes, she perceives unfathomable wisdom in it and it is her delight to behold the law and to meditate continually upon it. This simultaneously causes her to be filled with loving ecstasy and to burn with desire to be conformed to this law—as being the will of God—in her nature and her deeds. We observe this in David: “O how love I Thy law! I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Ps 119:97, 14, 47, 54).

The sanctified soul does not rest satisfied with this view and this delight, but makes a holy resolution and lifts up her heart to keep the law. “I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end” (Ps 119:106, 112). Prior to this, all the affections were as hotheaded horses, not giving heed to the intellect and will, but rather running ahead—yes, inclining the intellect and will (being deceived) to follow them. Instead, these are now redirected unto obedience and by this inner life stirred up to delight in and to be inclined toward the will of God. The entire body becomes subservient and all its members become instruments of righteousness. They are subservient to the sanctified soul—not only to execute her wishes, but the eye and the ear continually find substance for the nourishment of spiritual life. Behold, darkness is thus driven away by light, death is swallowed up by life, and sinful deformity is removed by holiness and beauty.

It does not end here, but the soul, having such an inner disposition, shows by her very deeds that she knows and loves God. She is opposed to all that is sin, internally cleansing herself from all the pollution of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God. She does this also in reference to others, according to the command of God. “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev 19:17). She commits herself to the practice of all virtue. In her “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal 5:22-23). She adds to her “faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Pet 1:5-7). The

soul will thus manifest herself as a child of light (Eph 5:8), and as a son of God be “without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15). Behold, God thus fully sanctifies His children within and without. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). Even though all this is but in part and much of the old man still remains as long as a saint remains in this life, the principal elements are nevertheless very delightful and adorn the child of God in a most excellent manner. This is similar to small children whose *first* footsteps and manifestation of understanding are very sweet and charming.

The Virtues Issuing Forth from Holiness

Holiness is not a single virtue, but rather, the shining forth of the image of God—being a combination of many virtues.

A soul, whom God in His eternal purpose has appointed to be a recipient of salvation, whom the Lord Jesus has loved and cleansed from all her sins in His blood, whom He has endowed with His glory and holiness, and who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, having become spiritually alive (thus pursuing sanctification), will exercise many virtues.

(1) Such a soul will be separated from the world. All that is to be found in the world, namely, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are foreign to her. She neither desires nor seeks them, and is fearful of them. She also views all worldly men as such. She wants to be known as having no use for their company, as considering them abominable, and as pitying their wretchedness. She does not conform to them either in clothing, language, or gestures.

(2) Such a soul has died to herself and denies herself. She knows indeed that there is nothing charming to be found in her, and therefore she does not desire that others honor, love, respect, or provide for her, etc. If she receives none of this, she is neither sorrowful, fretful, discouraged, nor alienated, but rather is in her element. If she receives this in some measure, she views it as a gracious gift of her Lord and she makes use of it again for Him, as long as it pleases the Lord to let her keep it. She views such goods only as travel money upon her way. If she has much, she shares it with her travel companions; does she have little, then she travels that much easier and with less of a burden, and it suffices her. She has no objective other than her Lord’s objective. She is therefore

accustomed to adjust her objective to the objective of others, in so far as it is not contrary to the will of her Lord.

(3) Such a soul finds all her delight in knowing, fearing, and loving God—in being subject to Him with reverence, doing His will with joyful willingness, trusting in Him, and having peace, quietude, and joy in Him. God is her all, and whatever is outside of Him is of no value to her. She has withdrawn herself from all things and has surrendered herself to God with all that she is and has.

(4) Such a soul is pious in the church as well as in her private quarters. In her solitude she continually either prays, reads, sings, or meditates. She is upright in her entire walk, truthful in her speech, meek, friendly, dignified, humble, and in good spirits. She is wise in her interaction with people, tender and compassionate with those who are in misery (whom she readily and frequently visits and is very helpful to), wisely exercises liberality toward the poor, is patient and submissive in bearing her cross, earnestly and zealously battles against sin, and is steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. She teaches with her silence, and rebukes, comforts, and stimulates with her speech. She is diligent and faithful in her calling, the performance of which has been entrusted to her by God. She is careful in all her actions, and, since she still has the old man within her, is on her guard and readily engages in spiritual warfare, with faith and hope anticipating the crown of life. All her virtuous dispositions and exercises issue forth in a godly clarity, purity, and luster; and this is *holiness*.

The Three Requisites of true Holiness

However, since all that glitters is not gold, everything that has the appearance of holiness and is called holiness is not holiness; this we have demonstrated. There are three requisites for holiness: 1) it proceeds from a good root: faith; 2) it functions according to a good rule: the will of God as revealed in the law; and 3) it has a good objective: the honor of God.

First, all that is worthy of being called holiness must proceed from a *holy principle*. *Faith* is the primary element of conversion as far as order is concerned. This faith unites a person with Christ who is our life. It does not only make us a partaker of His benefits, but *first* and foremost, of the Person Himself. Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Eph 3:17). What the soul is to man, Christ is in some respects to spiritual life. Faith not only affords the soul a right to eternal life and makes her a partaker of it, but it also, in actuality, unites the soul with Christ, and thus life and strength flow out of Him into the soul, and the believer lives by virtue of

this influence. "...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). The soul lives by virtue of this influence, and thus faith, in union with Christ, actively purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). This purified heart opposes the old man—which the apostle refers to as a mortifying of the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). This manifests itself immediately in holy deeds (James 2:17-18) and "worketh by love" (Gal 5:6). If the tree is not good, the fruits will not be good. If the heart is not in a holy state through union with Christ (which only comes about by faith), all actions—however holy they may appear—are of no value. The deeds as such may be good, but the parameters defining the essence are not good. However, those deeds which are the result of this believing union have an entirely different luster, and it is evident that they have been wrought in God (John 3:21). This is precisely what the Lord Jesus says: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). Paul speaks likewise: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith" (Col 2:6-7); "The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17).

Secondly, to holiness belongs a *good rule* with which the disposition of the heart and one's deeds must agree. This is nothing but the will of God alone, as presented in the law of the ten commandments. If one were to establish reason and propriety as a rule for virtues and vices, then one establishes reason to be his God. This is likewise true if one establishes human institutions, traditions, and his own desires as his rule for life and religion. However, as beautiful as everything may appear outside the will of God, it is nevertheless all sin and an abomination before God. God is the eternal and only majestic Creator and preserver of man, who in his being and motions is dependent upon God. Therefore God is also the only "... lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). This Lord and God has given a law to man in conformity to which he must live, constituting true holiness, whereby it may be known what holiness is. This law "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). One who seeks to be holy has great love for this law. He holds it before him as a rule, walking according to it as upon a paved walkway. "O how love I Thy law! Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them. I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. I will run the way of Thy commandments" (Ps 119:97, 165, 30, 32).

It is not sufficient to establish the law of God to be one's rule,

but one must always be conscious that such and such is the commandment of God. Here a good opinion is not valid when one is in doubt as to whether something has been commanded, and he thus either abstains or does this. Both are sinful, even though he might do that which was commanded, for he did it unconsciously and not as being the will of God. “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23).

Thirdly, to holiness belongs a *holy objective*. If someone has an evil objective—namely, his own honor, to be loved, to gain advantage, or to harm his neighbor—then the holier the matter is by means of which he seeks to accomplish his evil objective, the more abominable the sin is which he commits. Man differs depending on whether he is in the state of perfection, in the state of sin, or in the state of regeneration. *In the state of perfection* man knew God in the measure of perfection determined for him. Therefore, he could only undertake something for, and be stimulated by, the glory of God, to end therein. In the *state of sin* man does not know God and therefore he can neither have love for, nor have the objective to glorify God in all things. The foolishness of the *Labadists* is thus apparent, who wish to *first* purify an unconverted person from love for his salvation—which they call impure love. They insist that such a person should begin to seek out of love for the glory of God, Him whom an unconverted man neither knows nor is able to love. *In the state of conversion* man is partially illuminated so that he begins to know and love God, and in principle has therefore the glorification of God as his objective.

It is God’s will that man will cherish his salvation and He moves man thereby to faith and repentance. In regard to those, the entire Bible is filled with promises and threatenings stimulating in man a love for himself and causing him to be active by this self-love in using all means which are subservient to that end. Thus, in the way of sanctification a person may and must endeavor for further illumination, peace, purity, joy, and felicity—sanctification being the way to attain this.

A converted person, however, neither can nor wishes to remain stationary at this point; that is, only to seek God for his own benefit, and thus make himself the ultimate objective in which he would end. Rather, in seeking his own salvation, he increasingly obtains a view of God’s attributes. Even if he initially was not stimulated by the glory of God, he nevertheless ends therein, manifesting this by his gratitude toward God for each received benefit.

The more man progresses in sanctification, the more clearly he

will aim for the glory of God in all his activity. His initiative proceeds from love for God, the fear of God, and obedient submission to the will of the sovereign and only majestic Lord. To be thus stimulated is to be stimulated by the objective of glorifying God. For in this alone there is an acknowledgment of God's perfections and a manifestation of this acknowledgment. And if the glorification of God has reference to other people, it is one's aim to be led to know, love, and fear God—and acknowledge Him by his words and deeds; that is, declare what manner of God the Lord is. This agrees with the very nature of the regenerate person. In this he ends, and the more he grows, the more vividly he aims for, and the more powerfully he will be motivated by, this objective. If this objective has been absent in his activity, then he becomes restless and begins to grieve. However excellent his activity may otherwise have been, if in this activity his own honor, pleasure, and advantage, etc. have been the objective, he abhors himself, humbles himself before the Lord, and seeks forgiveness. If a pure objective has had the upper hand, and ulterior motives nevertheless surface, he is troubled in his activity and all comfort is gone, however excellent his performance may otherwise have been. A holy objective and purpose thus belong to holiness. It is this which the apostle commands: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31); "... therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:20). This was David's wish and endeavor: "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day" (Ps 71:14; "But I will ... yet praise Thee more and more" (Ps 71:14). This is the purpose for which God gives spiritual life to His people. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isa 43:21); "... the branch of my planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified" (Isa 60:21); "... that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Exhortation to Strive for Holiness

Now consider all that we have said concerning sanctification and examine it closely. You will be enamored and motivated by it to become a partaker of that holiness, and to follow in the footsteps of Paul who establishes himself as an example in this. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things

which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12-14). Therefore make an earnest effort to purify yourself from all the pollutions of the flesh and of the mind, perfecting your sanctification in the fear of God. Permit me to stir you up to this holy work; incline your ear and permit these exhortations addressed to you to enter your heart.

First, you who are regenerate, you may neither live as other men, nor as you have lived in the past. God requires and now expects something different from you. Hear these exhortations and commands of God: “I therefore, ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph 4:1); “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27); “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10); “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:1, 3). Therefore, partakers of the covenant, *let your heart be lifted up in the ways of the Lord* as Jehoshaphat did in 2 Chron 17:6. “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him” (Ps 45:10-11); “Walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8); “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16). Therefore, if any entreaty, exhortation, or command from God your Father is to have any effect upon your heart at all, let your heart be stimulated by this to a zealous observance of sanctification.

Give attentive consideration to your spiritual state and be stirred up thereby to a holy walk.

(1) Are you not a *chosen generation*? (1 Pet 2:9). The Lord has known you from eternity, separated you from all other men, ordained you to be His favored one in order that from among all other men you alone would be His property, for He “hath ... appointed us ... to obtain salvation” (1 Thess 5:9). “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). Ought not such gracious and glorious separation—and that for the purpose that we should be holy—impress upon our hearts that we must lead a separate and holy life?

(2) Proceed with your thoughts and consider how the Lord permits other people to remain outside of Christ as strangers of the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world; and

that you who were like these others by nature, He has chosen and ordained “that ye should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16). Consider that He called you with an holy calling (2 Tim 1:9), having delivered you “from the power of darkness, and hath translated (you) into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col 1:13), so that you are “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Should we then not be a people that dwell alone? Ought not our walk then be distinct from the walk of natural men? Ought we not manifest ourselves as “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9), so that all who see us would recognize us as a seed which the Lord has blessed (Isa 61:9)? After having had been called out of and having departed from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham no longer wished to return there, neither would he suffer his son to be brought back there after his death. When Israel had been called and drawn out of Egypt, they were not permitted to return there again. This is likewise true for us; we have been called out of, and have departed from, the world. How then would we return there again?

Thirdly, proceed with your thoughts and reflect upon the respective relationships you have with God and with the Lord Jesus, and let this quicken you to deny everything, and to zealously practice love and that which love demands.

There is a union between you and Christ indeed, and you are indeed one Spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17). You are indeed grafted into Him as into an olive tree and thus have become a partaker of His life and nature (Rom 11:17). Should not then the same life of Jesus become manifest in us, and should not we then walk as He has walked? You are indeed the bride of the Lord Jesus—generally being called such in the Song of Solomon. Would a bride not adorn herself to make herself pleasant and charming to her bridegroom? Would you then not do likewise for the Lord Jesus? With Paul, ought we not to be very desirous that “whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor 5:9)? What is, however, the ornament in which Jesus is pleased? It is holiness. “...Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Ps 93:5). In reference to this the Lord Jesus says: “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!” (Song 7:1). Therefore, show Jesus your being despised by the world, your humility, your love, your trust in Him, and the delightful manner in which you lean on Him in order that He may be pleased with this.

You are virgins who are in love with the Lord Jesus. “... therefore do the virgins love Thee” (Song 1:3). Therefore have the heart of a virgin, keep yourself pure and unspotted from the

world, have eyes of a dove, and let all your love go out to Jesus, so that He may see it and delight Himself in you. Sin, offensiveness

You bear the name, and are indeed also, children of God. World, evil character of our”... the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15). Therefore, you do not belong here, but in the other world; or better stated, heaven is your home and there you are children. Would not a child be loyal to his father and oppose his enemies? Would not a child honor, fear, love, and serve his father, and be fully in harmony with his father’s will in his manners, clothing, and the company he keeps? Therefore, since you are children of God, conduct yourselves as children; let everyone observe in your walk that you are a stranger upon earth, belong at home in heaven, that God is your Father, and that you are children of God.

Fourthly, consider what sin and the world are, so that you may the more readily be drawn away from them. Man being estranged from God through sin seeks His pleasure in that which is visible, and turns away from the invisible God. The nature of this old Adam is still in the regenerate and you must therefore be especially on your guard. You therefore, children of God, who again have made God your delight, seeking it in Him, what business do you have with the world and all that is to be found in it? Focus upon its most glorious aspect and what does it amount to? Solomon says from experience by the Spirit of God, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (Eccles 1:2).

(1) How many yearn for a piece of it all and reach out for something? However, the one acquires it, whereas the others can only watch, having pursued it in vain. How often you have desired one thing or the other, having imagined that it would bring you some pleasure! How frequently it has escaped you when you pursued it, so that you could not catch up with it, but have wasted both time and effort!

(2) And even if you did acquire it, how often you have experienced that it contained a bundle of thorns which pricked you, thistles by which you were burned, or a portion of rotten apples by which you defiled yourself; so that you were ashamed and embarrassed with your acquisition, or that it was nothing more than a handful of flies which flew away as soon as you opened your hand!

(3) In addition to that, have you not experienced frequently enough that all this yearning, desiring, and seeking for those things which are upon earth—however beautiful your pretense may have been—troubled your soul and made it restless, robbing you of your freedom and of your quiet peace of conscience? Did it

not rob you of your spiritual view of God and your communion with Him? Did it not hinder you in praying earnestly and intimately, as well as impeding you in the practice of virtue? Would you then as yet remain foolish and delight in your own sorrow and shame?

(4) Have you not experienced long enough how attractive the world becomes even if we make but a little use of her—how readily the flesh gains in strength and how much effort it requires before one can achieve a lively, earnest, and complete separation from it? Have you not experienced how quickly you are drawn away again and how difficult it is to forget the sweet taste which the flesh enjoyed? Would you then not be careful to see to it that the world no longer bewitch you?

(5) Furthermore, it is nothing but idolatry, and it dreadfully dishonors God—as if there were yet something in the creature in which one could find his delight or as if the all-sufficient God must possess something more. Would God not be offended with this? Would He not withhold His grace? Would He not punish such adulterous children? Would He not let them experience what it is to run to broken cisterns?

(6) The most excellent among the things of this world are advantage, honor, and entertainment. Beloved, what do these things amount to, however, if you analyze what they really are?

To find *delight* in what you see, smell, taste, and find in filthy stimuli is all but for a moment. It calls out to you loudly: It is not to be found with me. Why do you focus your eyes upon that which is nothing? The soul remains empty. What did I say? Empty? She is filled with restlessness and worldly pollution which is not becoming for virgins.

What do the *riches* of this world amount to? Do they make the possessor thereof one hair better, more attractive, or more glorious in himself? They are generally acquired with anguish if they are acquired honestly; with care they are preserved, and these unstable riches fly away with wings, causing grief. They generally saddle the possessor thereof with care, an unsatisfied desire, and pride—and perdition. How many would be good people if they were not rich! How many have not sunk away into the eternal pool with a clump of gold or silver as a millstone around their neck? Above all, *vain honor* is an abomination which a partaker of the covenant must dread, and must cast it away as hastily as one would remove a coal of fire from his clothing. What honor do you have, oh sinner, except the honor of your Head? You must clothe yourself with His honor and be satisfied. Secretly to aim in your actions for your own honor, praise, applause, respect, and love,

which would all end in yourself, is to rob God of what is His and to make yourself a god. It contaminates all your good deeds, grieves your soul, robs you of your liberty, and deprives you of God's blessings. Beloved, what have you ever gained from seeking yourself? Has your soul increased in wisdom, learning, and godliness? Is it such a great matter for you that a sheaf, a tree, a clump of dirt, a sinner, one destined for hell, and a slave of the devil greets you, bows down to you, worships you, adores you, and speaks well of you? Or what happens when a godly person makes an idol out of you and thus pollutes his own soul—when the love which should be focused only on Jesus, and the heart which should be only for Christ, is drawn away from Him to you? Are you the better for it if Christ is robbed and His children are corrupted? Since you are nothing but an empty bag, do you delight in being filled with air, puffing yourself up with pride whereby you become abominable in the eyes of God, the holy angels, and the wise among the godly? You will soon be the object of ridicule and be ashamed with yourself before the countenance of God and men. Consider for a moment all the glory, delight, and profit of the world with a wise and sound judgment, and you will find that they neither suit nor serve you, but are harmful to you. Therefore, partakers of the Lord's covenant, leave all that belongs to the world to the men of the world, whose portion is in this life. You ought to live for those things which are superior, invisible, and spiritual, manifesting yourself as a stranger in this world. You are the children of a King, who are too noble to be entertaining yourselves with beggars, and occupying yourselves with the world's toys. Do not argue over this, do not envy anyone because of this, and do not seek the help of others relative to this. Christ alone is more than enough for you for honor, delight, and advantage.

Fifthly, in order to stir you up to a holy life, focus upon God the Lord with whom you have entered into a covenant. How powerfully this ought to motivate you! "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:15-16). To that end take note of God's character, will, and honor.

(1) *Consider the character of God.* God is worthy that you, in all that you are, exist for Him, and that you with love, fear, confidence, and service be engaged toward God and end in Him with all those motions. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain" (Jer 10:7). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power" (Rev 4:11). Have you not lived long enough without an illustrious impression of the Lord's

preeminence, majesty, worthiness, and holiness? Have you not lived long enough without the distinct view that God Himself must be the foremost foundation and motive to live holily? Have you not lived long enough afar off? Have you not neglected to exalt God, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and walk before His countenance? Having entered into covenant with this God, however, you must now do nothing else but look unto Him, and, if you do so, you will notice that this will change your countenance and make it shine forth as Moses' countenance did when he had communed with God upon the mountain. Paul speaks of it in this manner: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18).

(2) Take note of *God's command*. God has commanded you to be holy; this is His command: *Be ye holy*. "Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently" (Ps 119:4). Are you not finished with living according to your own will? Do you not perceive that it is becoming for a creature to unite his will with God's will and that his felicity is to be found in this? Do you not perceive what audacity it is and how abominable it is that a creature, who is obligated to God by reason of multiple ties to Him—that a partaker of the covenant not only neglects to do the will and the commandment of his God, but also opposes it and does the contrary in the presence of and before the countenance of God? Therefore, you ought to have had enough of being disobedient, having turned away your heart and ear from the law, having satisfied your own lust with an unbridled spirit, and not having listened to the voice of God in your conscience. The time in which you live as well as God's dealings with you, require something different. Therefore, stir up yourself! Do you not have a desire to fear the name of the Lord? Do you not have a delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man? Therefore, behold Him who commands you, give heed to His will and commandment, give heed to yourself, and thus live as obedient children.

(3) Take note of the *honor of God*. The holy life of partakers of the covenant is to the glory of God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16); "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). It is to the honor of a father that the members of his household are well-mannered, and that his children imitate the virtue of their father. This is likewise true here. Other people do not render honor to God; only His children has He formed in order that they should show forth His praise (Isa 43:21).

They are a planting of the Lord in order that He might be glorified (Isa 61:3). In the eyes of the entire world they are a city upon a hill and a light upon a candlestick; everyone therefore ought to consider himself as such. If therefore you neglect to live holily and to manifest your spiritual nature by a virtuous life, or if you conform yourself to the world, so that no one can notice anything in you in which you excel the world, then you do not live to God's honor, but to His dishonor, and the holy name of God will be blasphemed because of you. However, if you manifest yourself as a true saint in deed and truth—despising honor, riches, and sinful entertainment, and instead live holily, righteously, moderately, humbly, and good-naturedly in the love and fear of God—then you will have the happy privilege that God is glorified by you. May the praises of God therefore be in your mouth, and may you show forth the praises of Him who has called you. May you live as a light amidst darkness and a crooked and perverse generation, your intent being to glorify God thereby.

Sixthly, the holiness of partakers of the covenant is very essential as far as other people are concerned. It is a true proverb that says, "*Rules teach, but examples attract.*" It cannot be expressed in words what a holy life can accomplish. Someone may be the most eloquent, powerful, and gifted minister in the world, but if holiness is absent in his life, then all his gifts are only harmful. However, a minister who lives a holy life preaches in the heart of the godly. This is likewise true for every partaker of the covenant. Therefore, have you not blinded people long enough with your careless life, which was little more than civil? Have you put them to sleep with the idea that there was no other holiness than yours, so that they were satisfied with their life which closely resembled yours, and have thus remained unconverted? Oh, if only so many had not been offended by you, seeing you at places where sinners gather, seeing you laugh and joke as sinners do, seeing you prance and show off as sinners do, seeing you engage in vain pursuits as sinners do, seeing in you no more spirit and life, fear of God, light, purity, love, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and a forsaking of worldly things and your own will, as is true for sinners! Perhaps they would have been convicted if in your entire walk you would have been truly spiritual and void of affectation. They would have perceived that their walk was not right—that to be spiritual is something different from what they had thought. The apostle Peter demonstrates this in 1 Pet 3:1, where we read, "... that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

The one godly person observes the other more than one would think. If they who are esteemed to be great Christians show little spirituality in their walk, and are leaning to the world in their conduct, others will readily imitate this, and ultimately the example of godliness will be lost sight of, and will soon become much conformed to the world. This will gradually progress, and thus the church will lose her glory and luster. If Christians, however—be they great or small—lead a life separated and withdrawn from the world and focused upon heaven, and if they were to manifest spirituality in their words and deeds without affectation, this would powerfully convict, put to shame, and stimulate others. Such a conduct penetrates the heart and the reins, and such exemplary conduct instructs in the absence of the person as if he were present. Wherever they have been, the footsteps of holiness are left behind. The little ones in grace are the teachers of those who are advanced, and those who are advanced are examples for the little ones. Thus, the church obtains glory and luster, respect and loveliness. In this manner Jerusalem becomes a praise upon earth and brings glory to Christ. Let every partaker of such a holy covenant begin to live in such a fashion, and we shall observe that the one will be ignited by the other as one candle ignites another candle.

The Rich Promises of Scripture in Reference to a Holy Life

Seventhly, God promises glorious things upon holiness. Even though the glory of God is the ultimate objective and the motions which issue forth from this are more excellent and lofty, a Christian must also allow himself to be motivated by promises which God makes to him in reference to such and such a matter. It should be delightful to us that God is willing to make promises. We must permit ourselves to be led in the way which God uses to stir us up, and we shall perceive and experience, with Moses, that it is very sweet, and a powerful motive, to look upon the recompense of the reward. It is sad that one meditates upon this so little. God promises a reward upon holiness; however, He does so by grace, as a father does to his child. “In keeping of them (*the commandments*) there is great reward” (Ps 19:11). If you ask how great this reward is, then I answer, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). This will not only be given them in the life hereafter, but He will also give them a portion of it here. The rewards which the Lord gives to those who practice holiness are the following:

- (1) Peace of conscience. “Great peace have they which love Thy

law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps 119:165). Holiness is synonymous with the “the ways of them” (Ps 84:5). He who walks in them walks surely and experiences a wondrous peace in his heart—the peace of God which passes all understanding (Phil 4:7).

(2) Sweet joy and delight. “It is joy to the just to do judgment” (Prov 21:15); “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in Thy statutes; Thy statutes have been my songs ... they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Ps 119:14, 16, 54, 111). In sin there is nothing but sorrow, but in holiness there is nothing but joy. It is the kingdom of God within the soul and it is a foretaste of heaven. He who desires to live joyfully let him strive for holiness.

(3) God promises to those who live a holy life that He will meet them and grant them nearness to Himself and revelation of Himself. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways” (Isa 64:5). The following promise is remarkable: “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). What else does a believer desire; what else does he long for? Behold, it is this which God promises to those who keep His commandments. This is also stated in Matt 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” He who is not diligent in sanctification ought not to complain that it is so dark, and that he perceives so little of God. He who delights therein must be diligent in the pursuit of holiness. He will experience the fulfillment of these promises within.

(4) God promises growth and increase in sanctification. “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2). A godly person cannot live without sanctification; absence of holiness is a continual death for him. However, to grow as calves of the stall, as a palm tree, and as a cedar of Lebanon—that is the delight and the joy of the soul. Is it not so with all of you who are godly? Therefore, stir up yourself, look unto the recompense, delight in it, and then, by the increase which will most certainly be given, you will be motivated to strive for sanctification. It will be difficult at *first*, but it will become more delightful and easier thereafter.

(5) God promises eternal felicity to those who deny themselves here, despise the world, love and obey God, confess Christ, and thus seek to live a godly life. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is

to come” (1 Tim 4:8); “...Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom ... for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in” (Matt 25:34-35). Eternal felicity is the ultimate benefit—oh, blessed end without end! Oh, light without darkness, life without death, gladness without sorrow, and holiness without pollution! God promises this ultimate outcome, however, and wishes to lead you there by this royal, beautiful, glorious, and joyful way of holiness. Therefore, why do you sit still and waste away in slothfulness? Why do you sink away in despondency? Arise, go forth, forget that which is behind, and reach forth unto that which is before you, and thus lay hold on eternal life.

We have thus sought to stir you up to godliness; however, it is the Lord who works this in us. Reader, may He who works in others both to will and to do, also grant this to you! Amen.

 CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

The Law of God: General Considerations

The rule for holiness is the law of God. We shall *first* discuss the law in a general sense, and then each commandment in particular.

תּוֹרָה (*torah*), which is the Hebrew word for “law,” is derived from הִרְוִיחַ (*hora*), which means “to teach,” “to instruct.” A law is thus a lesson or instruction in the way which one ought to go. This is likewise true for מִצְוָה (*mitzvah*), which means “commandment,” חֻקַּי (*chāq*), which means “institution,” as well as מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*), which means “judgment” or “judgments.” To make a distinction between these words, as if the one were to refer to the *moral*, and others to the *ceremonial* and *civil laws*, is without foundation (cf. Ps 119). In Greek we have the word νόμος (*nomos*)—a derivative of νέμειν (*nemein*)—which means “to direct,” or “to distribute,” for the law governs the life of man, and reward or punishment is distributed commensurate with the compliance with these directives. In Latin we have the word *lex*—a derivative of *legere*—which means “to read,” for laws are read to the subjects and are displayed in order to be read. It can also be a derivative of *ligare*, which means “to obligate”—for the law obligates to obedience. “Law” in our language may be a derivative from “to know”³ because the knowledge of God’s law has been impressed upon man’s nature, and God has more clearly made it known to His church in order that they “might know

³ This is probably only true in the Dutch language, as there seems to be a relationship between “wet” (law) and “weten” (to know).

them” (Ps 78:6). Thus by virtue of the etymology of the word we can say that *the law is a known and binding rule of conduct*.

The word “law” is used in various ways. It means 1) the law of nature (Rom 2:14-15); 2) the corruption of human nature which dominates in the unconverted, and frequently overpowers the converted (Rom 7:23); 3) the entire Word of God (Ps 19:7-8); 4) the books of Moses (Luke 24:44); 5) the gospel (Rom 3:27; Isa 2:3); 6) the civil laws (John 19:7); 7) the ceremonial laws (Heb 10:1); and 8) the moral law, comprehended in the ten commandments (Matt 22:36-38). The law in this latter connotation is the subject of our discussion here.

The law is the rule of life given to man by God, the only Lawgiver, to govern the disposition of his heart, thoughts, words, and conduct thereby.

If we view the law as a condition of the covenant of works, it carries with it the threat of death to transgressors and the promise of life to those who observe it perfectly. If, however, we view it in the context of the circumstances and the objective with which it was declared at Mount Sinai, then the true partakers of the covenant can indeed perceive what their transgressions do merit and what the consequences of perfect obedience would be. The punishment due upon them has been taken away by the Surety, however, and by their continual commission of offenses they readily perceive that they cannot perfectly keep the law nor obtain salvation by the law, but only through the Surety, Jesus Christ. They also understand that upon their transgressions God chastises them as a Father and that He graciously rewards their sincere efforts.

The Giver of the Law

The Lawgiver is God who is the Creator and Preserver of all things and the Lord of His church—His property. The act of legislating consists of several aspects. There must be 1) one who is superior to another in majesty and excellency; 2) proper subordination of the recipient of the law under the lawgiver; 3) the obligation of the subject to the superior to obey the laws which have been issued; and 4) laws themselves as they relate to conduct.

God alone, by virtue of His nature, is the majestic and exalted One. He gives life to man and by His influence preserves his being. The Lord Himself is worthy of being obeyed. He has the authority to issue commands, even if there were no creature. The existence of the creature presupposes its origin in Him, and therefore the creature is subject to Him in his existence and functioning. The creature is furthermore obligated to render all obedience to his Maker. Even if the intelligent creature did not have an express

command, he is nevertheless, from the *first* moment of his existence, obligated to obey God as the only Lawgiver in all that He has impressed upon his nature and in all that He would either command or prohibit relative to a variety of matters. This obligation is even impressed upon the conscience of man so that he is acquainted with and approves of both his obligation toward, and the will of, this Lawgiver, and obligates himself to obey Him. This disposition renders man fit to know God, the Lawgiver, by His works and to perceive and experience this binding relationship in a more lively manner. Man, in the state of perfection, had all this perfectly impressed upon his nature, and after the fall this impression remained in all men, although imperfectly. This is generally referred to as *the Law of Nature*, which we have discussed in chapter one. After the covenant of works had been broken, the Lord established the covenant of grace. When God had confined His people to Abraham's seed, and had separated them from other nations, He then pronounced the law with an audible voice from Mount Sinai and inscribed it in two tables of stone. This is generally referred to as *The Law of the Ten Commandments*. Of both the law of nature as well as the law of Scripture God is the author and giver (Rom 2:14-15). When God pronounced the law from Sinai, He began with, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod 20:2); "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). The Son of God stood in a relationship to the church as her Mediator and King from the very outset of the covenant of grace. The giving of the law is attributed to Him by reason of that relationship.

He is called "the angel," that is, the messenger, because He was appointed by the Father as Mediator and also because the Father executes everything that pertains to the church by Him. "...He shall ... suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger⁴ of the covenant" (Mal 3:1). He is the angel who has the name *Jehovah* in His bosom (Exod 23:20-21); this was the Angel Jehovah who appeared unto Abraham (Gen 18:1); this was the Angel who appeared unto Moses in the burning bush (Exod 3:2, 4, 6); and this same Angel, in His function as King, has given the law. This is evident in the following passage: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. This Moses ... did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. This is he (Moses), that was in

⁴ The *Statenvertaling* reads: the angel of the covenant.

the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers” (Acts 7:30, 35, 38).

In the giving of the law, the Lord used the angels and Moses as His servants. This is to be observed in the following passages: “Who have received the law by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53); “... and it (the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator” (Gal 3:19). In the giving of the law the *angels* have accompanied the Son of God, their Head, as His servants and surrounded the mountain (Deut 33:2). After the law had been inscribed in the tables of stone, the angels handed those stones to Moses (Gal 3:19). Moses, having received the tables from the angels, brought them to the people and laid them in the ark (Exod 34:29; Deut 10:5); similarly, he received the ceremonial laws from God upon the mountain and made them known to the people. In light of this it is said, “For the law was given by Moses” (John 1:17).

The Manner in Which the Law Was Given

The manner of lawgiving is twofold: 1) by verbal pronouncement and 2) by inscription upon two tables of stone. It was first of all given *by pronouncement*, and this was preceded by much preparation. Previous to this the covenant of grace had been held before the people, into which the people solemnly entered. Subsequently, the people had to sanctify themselves for two days and wash their clothing, in order to be internally and externally ready against the *third day* (Exod 19:18). The mountain was fully surrounded with fencing so that no one could touch the mount, it being announced that anyone who would break through and touch the mountain would be put to death. The entire Mount Sinai smoked, burned, and shook when the Lord descended with an extraordinary manifestation of His presence—without any form or appearance but in great darkness (cf. Exod 19:18; 20:21). All of this was accompanied with dreadful claps of thunder, lightning, and the sound of trumpets (Exod 19:16, 18-19). This occurred in order to stir up great respect and reverence in the people, thus convincing them that they could not be justified by the works of the law. It was furthermore designed to stir them up to the fear of God so that they would guard against the transgression of the law. However, the objective was in no wise to teach the difference between the Old and New Testaments; that is to say, that the church at that time stood from afar and the church today has free access. Nowhere is this recorded in the Bible. It is one and the same covenant and the Mediator of the covenant is the same yesterday and today. The law

pertains as much to us as to them and they had as much access to God by the Mediator as we do today.

Secondly, the law was given *by inscription upon two tables of stone*. First the Lord Himself made two tables of stone, engraved the law upon them, and gave them to Moses. “And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables” (Exod 32:19). When Moses came down from the mountain, however, and became aware of the making and serving of the golden calf and the breaking of the law (which had been declared to them so very recently), he broke these two tables of stone in holy zeal (Exod 32:19). Subsequent to this, the Lord commanded Moses to make two other tables of stone and to bring them to Him. This occurred, and the Lord by renewal wrote the law on the tables made by Moses, giving them to Moses who carried them to the people and laid them in a container or ark prepared for them (Deut 10:1, 4-5).

It cannot be satisfactorily resolved why the law was not written upon paper or parchment, nor in silver or gold. We may, however, turn with this to the human heart, which is as hard as a stone so that no one but God Himself can inscribe His laws there (Ezek 36:26-27). We may thus also reflect upon the eternal duration of the law, which would not be abolished in the Old or New Testament. Neither can it be satisfactorily resolved why the law was not written with letters placed upon the stone rather than by engraven letters. One may, however, conjecture that it is not sufficient to observe and perform the law externally, but rather that it must be engraved in the heart (Jer 31:33). The fact that the tables were inscribed on both sides may also support the suggestion that the law is the rule for all actions, and must govern man wherever he may go or turn, both in body and in soul, with all his faculties, and can neither add to nor subtract from it. Moreover, if someone asks why the law was not written upon one, but upon two tables, we answer that the law pertains to two objects: God and one’s neighbor, as the Lord Jesus shows in Matt 22:37, 39.

The circumstances to be noted when laws are given, are both time and location. *The time* was fifty days after the exodus from Egypt. They had then been delivered from the hand of their enemies and had been fully separated from all nations; they had entered into a covenant with God and had promised that the Lord would be their God and that they would walk in His ways. To that end they needed a rule of conduct, which the Lord then also gave to them. *The location* was a mountain. The heart of man must be drawn away from the lowly things of this earth and must be drawn

up to God and heavenly things. “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Ps 121:1); “Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens” (Ps 123:1).

It was a mountain in desolate Arabia—a barren location where there was nothing to eat or drink and where nothing attractive or delightful was to be found. They had to seek and have their delight only in God and had to live alone out of His maintaining hand. They therefore had to endeavor diligently to retain the Lord’s presence by obeying and being dependent upon Him.

The Law of God and its Relationship to the Covenant of Grace

Many things are to be considered concerning this law, and in doing so the nature and the purpose of the law will be the more evident. By way of preface it should be noted:

First, that a covenant was made between God and Israel, the church at Horeb, prior to the giving of the law. This is recorded in Exod 19.

(1) God’s requirement is stated in verse 5: “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant.” 2) The promise is: “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me ... and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod 19:5-6). The nation acquiesces in verse 8: “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.”

Secondly, that this covenant made at Horeb (or solemnly renewed, as they were already in it prior to this) is the covenant of grace. This is evident since,

(1) the covenant made with Israel at Horeb is the same covenant which God had established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—which without contradiction was the covenant of grace. “Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers” (Deut 7:12); “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Deut 29:9-10, 12-13).

(2) The covenant at Horeb contains all the promises of the covenant of grace: 1) I shall be a God unto you and “... ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people” (Exod 19:6); “I am the Lord thy God” (Exod 20:2); “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God ... and the Lord hath avouched thee this

day to be His peculiar people” (Deut 26:17-18). It is obvious that this is a promise of the covenant of grace (cf. Gen 17:8; Jer 31:33; 2 Cor 6:16). 2) They are promised that they will be a priestly kingdom. “And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6). That this is a promise of the covenant of grace is evident in the following passages: “Ye also ... are built up ... an holy priesthood ... but ye are ... a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9); “And hath made us kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6). These two include all other promises.

(3) They had the same sacraments: circumcision and the sacrifices.

Thirdly, that *the entire nation of Israel entered the covenant of grace* at the same time (Exod 19:8). However, the majority did it only externally and not in truth; that is, not with knowledge, faith, and love. Thus, by reason of this external entry there was also an external relationship between God and the people, and upon living an ungodly life they are said to be unfaithful to this covenant (Ps 78:37). “But with many of them God was not well pleased” (1 Cor 10:5).

Fourthly, that *no unconverted persons are in the covenant of grace, even though they have entered externally. Rather, they are truly and factually in the covenant of works as all the heathen are.* Although the covenant made in Adam has been broken by transgression and the law has thus been made weak by the flesh to justify man and to grant him life, men nevertheless remain under the same obligation, and, as often as they sin, they break the covenant. This is like a woman who, having committed adultery, is thereby not free from the law of her husband, but time and again commits adultery. Such is also the case here. When an unconverted person sins, he repeatedly breaks the covenant of works in which he is. Having entered the covenant of grace in an external sense and yet not walking in faith, he thus despises Christ and rejects the offered covenant of grace.

Fifthly, that *one must indeed make a distinction between the covenant made at Horeb prior to the giving of the law* (Exod 19), *and the law which was declared subsequent to it* (Exod 20). The law of the ten commandments was not the covenant, for the covenant had been made prior to this. The law is, so to speak, an appendix to the covenant already made, being a rule for the partakers of the covenant. Therefore the covenant and the law are expressly distinguished from each other—which we shall discuss more comprehensively later.

Sixthly, that *one must make a distinction between the contents or substance of the law, and the purpose for which it was given.* The *contents* or *substance* is identical to the demands of the covenant of works established with Adam, for:

(1) There is but one holiness, and therefore there can also be but one rule of holiness. The requirement held before Adam was

perfection, and this is likewise the requirement of the law of the ten commandments.

(2) The requirement of the covenant of works is impressed upon man's nature (Rom 2:14-15). However, the law which is impressed upon man's nature, is identical to the ten commandments, even though they are not equal in clarity. Thus, the requirements of the covenant of works and the ten commandments are identical.

(3) Eternal life was promised to Adam upon perfect obedience, which would also be the result upon the perfect observance of the ten commandments. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Rom 10:5). The purpose for the giving of the law of the ten commandments is, however, entirely different from the purpose for which God gave the law to Adam. The law was given to Adam in order thereby to obtain life, but the law of the ten commandments was not given to that end, since no one is capable of fulfilling it.

It was given:

(1) To convict the unconverted of sin, of the continual breaking of the covenant of works, and of the curse and worthiness of condemnation due to transgression.

(2) To cause the unconverted, who have been made acquainted with the covenant of grace, to look away from the covenant of works as not being able to give life, and to urge them to truly enter into the covenant of grace and to receive Christ by true faith unto justification. This is the purpose for the multiple repetitions of the demands of the covenant of works and the dreadful circumstances accompanying the giving of the law. In this respect the law is a schoolmaster, guide, teacher, and director to Christ (Gal 3:24).

(3) With the objective of being a steadfast rule of life for the partakers of the covenant of grace, to show them the way in all its purity, and to stir them up to enter into and persevere in this way, and to guide them in this way. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Ps 119:9). In reference to this the law is called: *the way of the Lord*, *pathway*, and *path* (Ps 119).

Seventhly, that *one must make a distinction between the end and purpose of the giving of the law, and the opinion of the unconverted concerning it*. The unconverted Israelites considered the ten commandments to be a requirement of the covenant of works, in the observance of which they had to seek life. They also viewed the ceremonial laws as such and intermingled it with the moral law. And thus, by the external observance of those laws—the ceremonial

as well as the moral laws—they sought to be justified (cf. Rom 9:31-32; Rom 10:3; Gal 5:3-4).

Eighthly, that *one must also make a distinction between the commandment and the incentives given for observance*. Incentives for observance are expressed with the *second, third, fourth, and fifth* commandments, setting forth that which is harmful to transgressors, as well as that which is profitable for those who observe the law. The commandments remain unchanged, but the incentives are presented from various aspects. Having said this by way of introduction, we shall now answer several questions.

The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not a Covenant of Works

Question Is the law of the ten commandments a covenant of works?

Answer: No; we shall demonstrate this to be so for the following reasons:

First, God's righteousness cannot permit a sinner to enter into a covenant of friendship without a Surety who bears the punishment of the broken covenant on behalf of the sinner. However, the Israelites were sinners, and the covenant of works is without a Surety. Thus, the law cannot be a covenant of works.

Secondly, the person with whom God would establish a covenant of works, ought to be able to satisfy the demands of the covenant of works, and to obtain life in consequence thereof, for God's holiness, righteousness, and truth will not permit the establishment of a true covenant upon the basis of a dishonest promise of man. These attributes also will not permit, as a condition for salvation, that man be required to perform that which he cannot perform. These attributes will not allow perfection to be again set before the impotent sinner as a condition for salvation, and thus establish a *second* covenant of works, even though God, by virtue of man's original condition when he was included in the covenant of works, may righteously demand perfect obedience from man who wilfully deprived himself of his own power. After the fall man is not able to perfectly satisfy the demands of a covenant of works, and therefore a new covenant of works cannot be established with man, and the law can consequently not be a covenant of works.

Thirdly, if the law were a covenant of works, then Israel, and all believers of the New Testament (for they are all under obligation to the law), would simultaneously be in two opposite covenants. They were under the covenant of grace, or else no one could have been saved. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom 3:20). And if the law were a covenant of works, they would be simultaneously under the covenant

of grace and the covenant of works. This is impossible, however, for the one disannuls the other. If they would have been obligated to seek salvation by works, there would have been no room for the covenant of grace; and if they would have been obligated to seek salvation by the covenant of grace, there would have been no room for the covenant of works, as the apostle clearly demonstrates in Rom 11:6. Furthermore, if the law were a covenant of works, it would destroy the promises. The law did, however, not disannul the promises (Gal 3:17-18). The law is therefore not a covenant of works.

Fourthly, if the law were a covenant of works, man would have had to seek salvation by works, for it is thus declared: “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5). This, however, one may not do, for it is not to be obtained in this manner. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3); that is, they are not partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and thus also not of salvation. The law is therefore not a covenant of works.

Fifthly, there can be no manifestation of mercy in the covenant of works; however, there is room for mercy in the law of the ten commandments. “And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” (Exod 20:6). Thus, the law is not the covenant of works.

Objection #1: The law, which has as its contents perfect personal obedience, is called a covenant. “... for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exod 34:27); “And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deut 4:13). The tables are called *the tables of the covenant* (Deut 9:11).

Answer (1) The word *covenant* has various meanings, so that from a single use of this word one cannot draw the conclusion that it refers to a literal covenant established by mutual agreement. It refers here to an immutable promise (Gen 9:9-10), a steadfast ordinance (Jer 33:20), and a singular command. “I made a covenant with your fathers ... saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother” (Jer 34:13-14).

(2) The covenant at Horeb was made prior to the giving of the law, and thus the law cannot be the covenant itself.

(3) It is a figurative manner of speech, and the appendix frequently (and thus also here) bears the name of that to which it is appended.

The covenant of grace having been established, the law was appended thereto as a rule of conduct for the partakers of the covenant.

Objection #2: Since the law is continually contrasted with grace, it therefore follows that the law is the covenant of works. This is to be observed in the following passages: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17); “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise” (Gal 3:18; cf. Rom 4:14; Rom 10:5-6).

Answer (1) A distinction must be made between the substance and contents of the law, and the purpose for which it has been given. The purpose for the giving of the law is that it be a rule of life. As such the law is not contrasted with grace; rather, it is grace that a steadfast rule of life has been given to the partakers of the covenant. However, the law as far as its demands are concerned, and the contents of the covenant of works made with Adam, is contrasted with grace. The law was not given for that purpose, however, and it can thus not be concluded that it is equivalent to the covenant of works.

(2) The Jews corrupted the true purpose for which both the moral and ceremonial laws had been given. They considered it to be a covenant of works and sought for their righteousness in this covenant—as many who are Christians only in name still do. These misconceptions are identified and rebuked in the texts mentioned above.

(3) Scripture states very clearly that the law is not contrary to the promise. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4); “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid” (Gal 3:21). It is thus evident in which manner the law is and is not contrary to the promise, and that the law of the ten commandments is not a covenant of works.

The Law of the Ten Commandments: Not the Covenant of Grace

Question Is the law of the ten commandments equivalent to the covenant of grace, or is it a compendium of this covenant?

Answer: The covenant established at Horeb prior to the giving of the law is truly the covenant of grace; however, we deny that the law of the ten commandments is the covenant of grace or its compendium. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, the entire contents of the law of the ten commandments was perfectly impressed upon the nature of Adam, and this law would have, if his transgression had not interfered, been passed on perfectly to his descendants. After the fall, the law is yet impressed upon the hearts of the heathen, although imperfectly (*cf.* Rom 1:19-20;

Rom 2:14-15). If, however, the law were a compendium of the covenant of grace and equivalent to the covenant of grace itself, it would already have existed prior to the fall, and the covenant of grace would have been naturally known to the heathen apart from the gospel. This is absurd, and thus also that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Secondly, the law is the requirement and condition of the covenant of works, life being promised upon personal obedience to the law: “Do this and thou shalt live.” Whatever is identical to the covenant of works in its demands and contents cannot be equivalent to the covenant of grace. For where the law says: “Do this and thou shalt live,” the covenant of grace says: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” These two covenants are too distinct from each other, and the one covenant negates the other (Rom 10:5-6; 11:6).

Thirdly, Christ is the Surety of the covenant of grace who therefore must be included in a description of this covenant; it cannot be understood apart from the knowledge of Christ. However, in the law there is not a word regarding a Surety, or regarding faith in the Surety, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the law is not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Fourthly, the covenant of grace is efficacious unto the regeneration, justification, and salvation of man; however, the law is not efficacious unto regeneration, justification, and salvation. “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal 3:21); “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise” (Gal 3:18); “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). Yes, those who are under the law are under the curse (Gal 3:10); the law is therefore not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Fifthly, the covenant of grace only makes promises—also the inscription of the law in the heart (cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26-27). The law, however, only demands and has no promise, except upon the condition of perfect, personal obedience—a promise which cannot be fulfilled by anyone after the fall as no one is able to fulfill the condition. The law demands but does not promise any efficacy. The law is therefore not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Objection #1: Since Christ, as Mediator and King of His church, has given his church the law of the ten commandments, it thus follows that the law of the ten commandments is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) We deny the conclusion. If, however, this conclusion were correct, then Christ, as Mediator and King of His church, has given His people a rule of life. If this is true, it must thus follow that the law of the ten commandments is a rule according to which the partakers of the covenant must live. The rule of life for the partakers of the covenant is to be distinguished from the covenant itself.

(2) The covenant had already been made prior to the giving of the law, which proves that the law is the rule which Christ has given to His partakers of the covenant.

Objection #2: The preamble, *I am the Lord thy God*, shows clearly that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace, for that expression is the essential expression of the covenant of grace.

Answer: This phrase is not always expressive of the covenant of grace. This is evident in Isa 28:26, where we read, “For his God doth instruct him to discretion,” namely, to cultivate the land. Nevertheless, we admit that from the preamble and the occasional addition of an incentive to a commandment it is to be observed that there must be a covenant of grace. It therefore does not follow, however, that the law itself is the covenant of grace, for the expression *I am the Lord thy God* is frequently added to commands and warnings which, as all agree, are not equivalent to the covenant of grace (cf. Lev 18:30; Judg 6:10, and many others). The preamble manifests the authority of the One who commands, and the obligation of the people to obey Him—not only because He is God and they are His creatures, but also because they had entered into a covenant of grace with God. There is therefore as much a distinction between the preamble and the law, as there is between the One who commands and the command.

Objection #3: Mercy is mentioned in the law. “I will show mercy,” etc. The mercy of God can, however, not be manifested to a sinner except by way of the covenant of grace. Therefore, the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer: One must make a distinction between the command and the incentive. Simply because an incentive is taken from the covenant of grace, it does not follow that the law, for the observance of which the incentive is used, is the covenant of grace itself. Rather, it proves the contrary: This duty is not equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Objection #4: The law is a covenant; however, it is not the covenant of works. Therefore it must be the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) It has already been demonstrated above that the law is not the covenant of works, as well as that whatever bears the name “covenant” is not necessarily the covenant itself. Circumcision is also denominated as a “covenant” (Gen 17:10).

(2) Those who make this objection maintain that, in addition to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, there is yet another covenant. This they call an external and exemplary covenant. Their conclusion that because the law is not the covenant of works it is therefore the covenant of grace, is then negated. They themselves would then have to answer that there is a *third* covenant.

(3) And just because the law is not the covenant of works, it therefore does not follow that it is the covenant of grace. It therefore suffices that it is a rule for the partakers of the covenant of grace.

Objection #5: Whatever is confirmed by blood—typifying the blood of Christ—is the covenant of grace; however, the law has been confirmed with typical blood. “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people” (Heb 9:19). The law is thus equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) If one would have to draw such a conclusion from this proposition, then the people would be equivalent to the covenant, for they were also sprinkled with blood. The latter is absurd and thus also the *first*. If one wishes to draw the conclusion that whatever was sprinkled with typical blood belongs to the covenant of grace, there is no objection; and if one then furthermore wishes to conclude that the law of the ten commandments therefore belongs to the covenant of grace, we also do not object, as long as it is considered to be a rule for the partakers of the covenant.

(2) It is nowhere stated, however, that the two tables of stone upon which the law was written were confirmed and sprinkled with blood. This would have to be demonstrated for the conclusion to be of any value.

(3) Moses sprinkled the book in which the entire ceremonial worship—typifying Christ—was recorded, which irrefutably belongs to the covenant of grace.

Objection #6: The ceremonial laws belong to the law of the ten commandments, namely, to the *second* commandment, giving command to serve God in a manner commanded by Him. It is obvious, however, that the ceremonial laws belong to the covenant of grace. Therefore the law of the ten commandments is the covenant of grace itself.

Answer (1) There is a further conclusion to be made from this presupposition. This ought to be: thus the law also belongs to the covenant of grace. We concur with this, it being a rule for the partakers of the covenant.

(2) Also the civil laws belong to the moral law—to the *second* table. Should one thus also be permitted to conclude (the argumentation is identical) that therefore the ten commandments are a political or civil covenant? By no means, and one also cannot therefore conclude that it is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

(3) We deny that the law of the ten commandments prescribes the ceremonial laws; this neither occurs in the *second* nor in any other commandment. The basis for all service of God—in the covenant of works as well as in the covenant of grace, and in the Old as well as the New Testament—is indeed to be found in the words of the *second* commandment, the contents of which are to serve God in a manner prescribed by Him. However, no mention is made at all of the ceremonial service. To conclude from this common foundation—from which issues forth the service of God in the state of perfection and in the New Testament, as well as in the ceremonial service—that this commandment is ceremonial and that the law is therefore equivalent to the covenant of grace, is no more valid than to conclude thereby that the law is a covenant of works because it points out how man is to conduct himself in the covenant of works toward God and His service.

Objection #7: The covenant of grace obligates all partakers of the covenant to the keeping of the law; thus the law belongs to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) The thrust of the argument is the same. The covenant of works obligates all men to the keeping of the law; thus the law belongs to the covenant of works. The fallacy of the conclusion is thus evident, for the law obligates all men.

(2) All that belongs to the covenant of grace is not the covenant of grace itself. Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper belong to the covenant of grace; nevertheless, they are not the covenant itself. We agree that the law belongs to the covenant of grace in regard to the purpose for its issuance, and in regard to the demand that it be a rule for partakers of the covenant. What basis is there in this for constructing a covenant of grace from the law?

Objection #8: The law demands faith, and faith belongs to the covenant of grace; the law is thus equivalent to the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) The covenant of works demands faith in God, and then, according to that argument, the law is the covenant of works—and if it is the covenant of works, then it is not the covenant of grace.

(2) Faith in Christ belongs to the covenant of grace; however, this is not required by the law. Christ is not revealed in the law.

Objection #9: The *fifth* commandment promises the land of Canaan, and Canaan was the earnest of all the promises of the

covenant of grace; the law is thus the compendium of the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) One must make a distinction between the law and its incentives—they do not change the nature of the commandment, nor do they make the commandment of the same nature as the source of these incentives. These incentives at times are derived, however, from the nature of God, and at other times from His works and from a given promise. This transpires in the covenant of works as well as in the covenant of grace. One therefore may not conclude from the promise of Canaan that the law is equivalent to the covenant of grace.

(2) No reference is made to Canaan in the *fifth* commandment; however, the children of Israel could logically deduce this, just as Paul concludes that it refers to all countries where God has decreed one's residence to be. "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:3).

(3) We deny that Canaan was an earnest of all the promises of the covenant of grace and of heaven. One will never be able to demonstrate this, and thus the conclusion is at once nullified.

The Covenant Made at Horeb: Not a Mixture of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

Question Is the covenant made at Horeb a mixed covenant, consisting partially of the covenant of works and partially of the covenant of grace? Some call this covenant a *national* covenant, and consider it to be thus. They maintain that God would be satisfied and would bless them, even though they did not live in perfect conformity to the law, if they but had a sincere intent and earnestly endeavored to be obedient and practice true godliness—and if they furthermore believed in the Messiah, being the fulfillment of what was lacking in them.

Answer (1) The word "national" does not suggest that there is another covenant besides the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. It only indicates that God established the covenant of grace with the *nation* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that it would be confined to that nation until the coming of the Messiah.

(2) Christ alone is the cause of justification, and the works of man play no role in justification at all. God is, however, pleased with the sincere efforts of believers and rewards them graciously.

(3) We do deny, however, that the covenant made at Horeb is a mixed covenant, distinguished from the covenant of works and the covenant of grace—as if a "hybrid" covenant had been composed from both. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, it is clear from all that we have proven in the above; namely, that the law, as far as the purpose of its issuance was concerned, is not equivalent to the covenant of works, and that a covenant of works cannot be established anew with the sinner. This cannot be done in its entirety, but then also not partially. It has already been shown that the law is not equivalent to the covenant of grace. If the law is neither the one nor the other, then a mixed covenant cannot be composed from both of them.

Secondly, Paul shows in Rom 11:6 that one of the two must function, and that they cannot be mixed together. “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” The way of the covenant of grace and the way of the covenant of works are so far removed from each other—yes, are so entirely contradictory—that a mixture of the two is not possible. It is therefore impossible to make a *third* covenant from those two.

Thirdly, if works and faith, the righteousness of man and Christ, were to coalesce, one would acquire righteousness partially by works and partially by faith, contrary to Rom 9:30-32. Then Christ would not be a perfect Savior, for man would himself add something to his justification, contrary to Rom 3:24, 28 and Heb 7:25. Then they would be subject partially to the curse (Gal 3:10), and partially to the blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3). And furthermore, if some were hypocritical in their obedience, what then? Would Christ’s satisfaction then also be nullified? Would they then fall out of grace? Would the promises of this singular covenant of grace be nullified? As you see, this proposition is fraught with absurdities and must therefore be rejected.

Objection: Holiness is required as a condition for the covenant at Horeb. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me” (Exod 19:8); “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exod 19:8). On the other hand, mercy is promised to those that are upright. “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” (Exod 20:6). Since obedience as a condition and mercy proceeding from free grace are joined together, there is a mixed covenant, consisting partially of the covenant of works and partially of the covenant of grace.

Answer (1) Here two matters are conjoined which are distinct from each other. In Exod 19 mention is made of the covenant of

grace, and in Exod 20 the law is declared as a rule for the partakers of the covenant, with mercy added as an incentive.

(2) In Exod 19 the covenant of grace is solemnly established as we have shown in the above. Obedience and faithfulness to this covenant are not demanded as a condition of the covenant, for God can neither make demands upon a sinner by way of a new covenant nor issue promises upon that condition, as was shown earlier. Rather, it is required as a duty, test, and demonstration of their sincerity—both upon entering into, as well as living in the covenant of grace. The promise which, among others, God makes in the covenant of grace is that He will sanctify them. Thus, no one can enter into this covenant unless he has a desire for holiness, and one can neither assure himself nor pretend to be in the covenant of grace unless he is a partaker of holiness. “Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). When holiness is required in the covenant of grace, it is not required as a condition, but as a token of sincerity. True and false partakers of the covenant are hereby distinguished from each other, and by this they are identified. Those who do not obey nor keep His covenant, are no partakers of it, and do not belong to God. However, those who do obey and keep His covenant show that they are partakers of the covenant and belong to God. When the people accepted God’s proposal, most did so only with the mouth, and not with an illuminated, willing, and sincere heart. True believers gave expression to the obligation which was theirs, and with delight approved of it. They gave expression to their sincerity in their transaction with God, as well as to their willingness and heartfelt inclination to obey God, knowing that the execution thereof was not possible in their strength, but in the power of God who made them willing. When they heard that God promised that He would do so to all who truly entered into covenant with Him, they willingly surrendered to that covenant and declared this to be so.

The Law of the Ten Commandments: Of Eternal Duration and Binding to the New Testament Believer

Question: Is the law of the ten commandments a rule of eternal duration, which all true believers in the New Testament are also obligated to observe?

Prior to answering this question, the following matters must *first* be noted by way of preface.

First, the law of the ten commandments as declared from Sinai does not place under obligation the heathen who have never had

this law. “For as many as have sinned without the law ...” (Rom 2:12). The law of nature is a law unto them. However, the moral law pertains to all who are in the church, have the Word of God, and who have ever heard the law. To them the law is declared and they are under obligation to it, commensurate with the manner in which it is given.

Secondly, the foundation for being obligated to the law is not because reason teaches that something is either good or evil; for then it would not be the law of God, but a rational statement. What reason would show to be good to one, another—also by virtue of reason (which is corrupt in man)—would judge to be evil. Rather, the foundation for such obligation is the command of God, the revelation of God’s will, and the fact that God has commanded one thing and forbidden the other. Thus, the obligation is related to the authority of the Lawgiver and His will. To this man subjects himself, and thus his good deeds constitute obedience and his evil deeds disobedience.

Thirdly, a distinction must be made between the commandments themselves as far as substance, words, and meaning are concerned, and the incentives by which they are motivated. The incentives are taken from circumstances which pertained to the Jews only, such as, “... which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” and “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt.” The promise concerning Canaan, and similar promises, do not pertain to us in our circumstances as such, but only insofar that we must be stirred up to obedience by divine blessings. However, even if the incentives as relating to those circumstances do not pertain to us, the commandments nevertheless remain in force and place us under obligation.

Fourthly, since the law was not given as a covenant of works, it also has no such purpose today. As the unconverted were then under the covenant of works, however, and consequently under the law, being representative of the contents of the covenant of works, all the unconverted are also presently under the covenant of works and thus also subject to the law in said manner. As the law condemned them then, it does so likewise today. Similarly, as the law was then given to partakers of the covenant as a rule for life, this is likewise true today. And as partakers of the covenant, upon transgression, brought guilt upon themselves, making themselves worthy of punishment—even though the Surety had taken this from them and upon Himself—the law is likewise a rule of life for partakers of the covenant at present. Upon transgression they also make themselves guilty and worthy of punishment, even though

Christ, the Surety, has already taken this from them upon Himself and made satisfaction. Upon every transgression the law declares them guilty and worthy of punishment, even though Christ has made them free from the guilt and punishment incurred.

Fifthly, as the law was not given to partakers of the covenant at that time in order to be justified thereby, it likewise is not given for that purpose today, for it has been made weak by the flesh (Rom 8:3).

Sixthly, the law is as rigorous and strict today as it was in the Old Testament. Law is law, and justice is justice; nothing can be overlooked here. We are no less free from the rigor and strictness of the law than they were. The sincere godliness of the godly in the Old Testament was as pleasing to God and had as gracious a reward as is now true in the New Testament.

Seventhly, the believers of the Old Testament, upon transgression of the law, were convicted, had sorrow and pangs of conscience, experienced estrangement from God, prayed for forgiveness, and sought reconciliation until the Lord spoke peace to them again. The godly of the New Testament are no more free from all those emotions engendered by transgression than were they of the Old Testament.

Eighthly, *to be obligated* means that man is bound by the law-giving authority of God to be obedient, and that upon transgression he is subject to bear the punishment.

Ninthly, *abrogation* occurs when 1) the obligation terminates, since the law was only given for a specific time, and subsequently would no longer be a law—and therefore would also not be in force anymore. Such was true for the ceremonial laws, which were in force until Christ (the embodiment of the shadows) came, and no longer; 2) the Lawgiver nullifies or rescinds such laws which had been issued without any time limitation; or 3) by the giving of laws which are directly opposite to the other laws and thus cannot coexist with the previous laws.

The *Socinians* reject the law entirely, adhere to the law of nature, and add to this the law which Christ has given to the Christians, which in their opinion is a new law differing from the one given on Sinai. The *Papists* erase the *second* commandment. Others reject the *fourth* commandment. *Antinomians* also reject the entire law. Such individuals are either loose or ungodly men who despise all godliness, using Christian liberty as a pretense for all manner of licentiousness; or they are those who are proponents of *godliness*. The latter maintain that it is not lawful to conduct themselves contrary to what the law has either commanded or forbidden, and that everyone is obligated to practice the virtues which are commanded

in the law. Their motive for this, however, is not that it is either forbidden or commanded in the law; in their opinion, this law was only given to Israel and is not binding at all in the New Testament. They maintain that one must now refrain from all sin and practice all virtue only out of love for God, doing so by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who teaches believers all things and works in them all things that are pleasing to Him—all of this apart from the law as having any binding force. It thus appears as if we agree in essence; however, these propositions give license to the ungodly for their ungodliness, and lead to fanaticism. It engenders the absence of true holiness, for what the one considers lawful the other considers unlawful, while all imagine to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it is contrary to the Word, which calls sin $\alpha\&\nu\omicron\mu\iota/\alpha$ (*anomia* = lawlessness), and teaches the practice of virtue by the binding force of the law, the content of which is love. In addition to this you will rarely find such an *Antinomian* who also does not adhere to various other errors. We shall *first* confirm the truth and then refute those errors.

The Eternal Duration of the Law of the Ten Commandments

That the law is and remains a rule of eternal duration is evident for the following reasons:

First, the law of nature remains in force and puts all men under obligation (Rom 2:14-15). The law of the ten commandments is, however, identical to the law of nature as far as contents are concerned (not in the manner in which it was given), and thus the law of the ten commandments also remains in force and is binding in the days of the New Testament.

Secondly, the law was solemnly given to the church without any limitation of time. This law has never been rescinded, neither has a counter law ever been given to negate the other. Thus, the law remains in force as long as there is a church to whom it is declared.

Thirdly, the Lord Jesus declares that the law of the ten commandments has not been abrogated, but that it remains a binding rule for all times. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19-19). It is evident that the reference here is not to the ceremonial law, since Christ, being

its embodiment, has abrogated it and the apostles have preached it as having been abrogated. Neither is he who maintains this abrogation the least, nor is he superior who now teaches and practices it. Christ here speaks of the moral law of the ten commandments, which is evident from both what is said and from what follows. For Christ quotes several of these commandments, gives the correct exposition, and purifies them from the false exposition of “them of old.” Christ has *fulfilled* this law. This does not imply that He, having fulfilled it by His active obedience, has abrogated this law, or that He has improved that which was imperfect in the law, having given a more perfect law instead; rather, to fulfil means to do. “Whosoever shall do them ...” (Matt 5:19); “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:8); “... and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). In this manner Paul “fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:19), and fulfilled the Word of God (Col 1:25). Of this law Christ says that *He will not destroy it*, that not one jot or tittle shall pass from this law until heaven and earth shall pass away, and that he who will break and reject the *least commandment* (in contrast to the *greatest commandment* in Matt 22:38) will be *the least in the kingdom of heaven*. This means that he will not be in it, which is also the meaning of being the least (cf. Matt 20:16; Luke 13:30). It thus proves to be irrefutably true that the law of the ten commandments is a rule of eternal duration.

Fourthly, the Lord Jesus commands the performance of that which is good since the law requires this. Thus, the law remains a binding law. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt 7:12).

Fifthly, the keeping of the moral law is proposed and urged everywhere in the New Testament. The text references are numerous, but we shall only present some.

(1) “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). The apostle had said in verses 24 and 28 that we are freely justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and that man is justified by faith without the works of the law. On the basis of this he proposes an objection: “Do we then make void the law through faith?” Does the law then no longer pertain to us?

Do we no longer have any dealings with it? Has it been abrogated? No one can object that the apostle here speaks of the ceremonial laws, since no mention is made of them in the entire chapter, nor in the subsequent chapter in which he discusses the justification of Abraham. Furthermore, the apostle shows by his

answer “God forbid,” etc., that he is speaking of a law to which we are obligated, which can be none other than the moral law of the ten commandments, since we are completely free from the ceremonial laws. He declares that this law is not made void, rejected, and abrogated through faith unto justification without the deeds of the law; but *we establish* it; that is, we declare and approve that we are under obligation to it—not to be justified thereby, but as a rule of life to give us direction in sanctification which goes together with justification.

(2) “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself ... therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:8-10). The established duty for Christians is love, the reason being that this is required by the law. Which law?—the law of the ten commandments, which forbids adultery, murder, theft, the bearing of false witness, and coveting. Thus, Christians are under obligation to the ten commandments as being a rule of life.

(3) “By love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Gal 5:13-14). Here one is again urged to exercise love because the law demands it, it being shown that it is the law which requires love to one’s neighbor as himself. It is evident from Matt 22:39 that this is the law of the ten commandments, where the Lord Jesus, upon the question, which is the great commandment of the law, comprehends the law in two commands, the *second* here being quoted by the apostle.

(4) “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the *first* commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph 6:1-3). If children are under obligation to obey their parents, they must be motivated to this because the fifth commandment requires it with a promise being added to it. The law thus remains in force as a rule for our life.

(5) “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: For whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:8, 10-11). The apostle demonstrates

the law to be the rule of life by approving the conduct of those who adhere to it, and by stating that he sins against all commandments who offends in one. He declares that he is speaking of the law which forbids adultery, murder, etc. This, however, is the law of the ten commandments, and thus the law of the ten commandments is an eternal rule—as much in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament.

(6) All sins committed by believers are transgressions of the law. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4); “... for where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15). Believers in the New Testament, however, sin daily (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10; 1 John 2:1; James 3:2). The law thus remains in force as a rule of life.

The Law of Christ is Equivalent to the Law of the Ten Commandments

Evasive Argument #1: Believers sin against the law of Christ, but not against the law of the ten commandments.

Answer: The law of Christ is identical to the law of the ten commandments. Christ did not give another law; Christ gave that law of the ten commandments. To this law He subjected Himself and has perfectly lived according to it, leaving us an example therein. He Himself is also a living law. Christ has never given liberty to transgress any of the ten commandments, be it those that pertain to murder, adultery, or theft, etc. Thus, the law of Christ is the law of the ten commandments.

Evasive Argument #2: To sin is to conduct one’s self contrary to the love of Christ.

Answer (1) To sin against the love of Christ, the love of God, and the law, is one and the same thing, for the law requires love to God and our neighbor.

(2) Believers of the Old Testament also sinned against the love of God and Christ who is the same yesterday and today. Their faith was identical to our faith, which “worketh by love,” and their sins were committed contrary to their faith and love, which demanded holiness. Furthermore, love is also an incentive not to sin but to live holily—which is a living according to the law.

Objection #1: There is agreement in this, since both insist upon sanctification. Regardless of whether one does so from different motives than another person, one must be tolerant of another.

Answer (1) This is the ancient language of all heretics. They reason as follows: *It is already an old issue, and there is agreement as far as the matter itself is concerned, that is, holiness. We both insist on this, and therefore, be tolerant, be tolerant.* This has an appearance of

excellency, for those who propose moderation are the men of peace, but those who stand in the breach for the truth are deemed to be stubborn. By means of this wonderful illusion they seek to promote their errors all the more forcefully, and upon gaining the upper hand they can no longer tolerate sound doctrine. Instead, they will chase faithful ministers from the pulpit and out of town. This was the result of the toleration of the Arminians.

(2) The basis upon which, and the manner in which, sanctification functions, determines its respectability and essence. If one does not agree as to what the foundation and manifestation of sanctification are, there is no common ground whatsoever. Papists and Socinians also boast of works and holiness, but nevertheless follow the institutions of men, and reflect upon virtue in a natural manner; that is, apart from Christ and apart from true faith in Christ. Ought this then also to be called good?

(3) If the love to Christ is set forth as a law, one lays the groundwork for confusion in doctrine and life. What the one believes he must do out of love to Christ, the other will think he must refrain from out of love to Christ. The love to Christ will motivate the one to this and the other to something else, for love is imperfect here. Furthermore, one's own meaning can be very subtly mixed in with this, so that with some it results in fanaticism. It is evident from all this that one, prior to establishing ecclesiastical ties with such persons, must very earnestly endeavor to ascertain what the basis for sanctification is, as well as the manner in which it functions—both in reference to ourselves and to others. If someone is weak in this area, but yet willing to learn, one can and must tolerate such a person according to the circumstances.

The Moral Law: The Rule of Life for New Testament Believers

Objection #2: There are many texts which declare that believers in the New Testament are not under the law, the following being the most prominent: Rom 6:14; Rom 7:6; Gal 3:23-25; Gal 5:18, 23; and 1 Tim 1:9.

Answer: To these and similar texts we shall *first* respond in general and then explain each text.

First, in general it must be noted that Paul had to deal with individuals who combined the moral and ceremonial laws, seeking their righteousness and justification in the performance of those laws, not being able to harmonize the shadows with their embodiment. When the apostle then declares that believers are not under the law, he at times speaks of the ceremonial laws due to Christ having come, and at times of the moral law as a condition of the

covenant of works—this being the manner in which such individuals view the law. Thus, there is nothing in these texts from which one could conclude that believers of the New Testament are not under obligation to the moral law as a rule of life.

Secondly, one must view the law either in regard to its demands, or in reference to the objective for which it was given upon Sinai. Since the image of God is but one, there is also but one holiness. Thus, the law which proposes perfect holiness is identical in its demand to the law which Adam had before the fall in the state of perfection as a condition of the covenant of works. The objective for the issuance of the moral law, however, was not that it be a condition of the covenant of works, but a rule of life for the partakers of the covenant of grace, who, on the basis of Christ's satisfaction, are justified and the recipients of salvation. In respect to the *first*, believers are not under the law; however, they are in reference to the latter. To have the law is a privilege to them and it is a joy to them that they have such a steadfast and delightful rule of life. And since they have not in this respect been relieved from their obligation to the law, they also have no desire to be relieved from it. They love the law and it is their delight. However, all the unconverted, also in the New Testament (although they are free from the ceremonial laws) are nevertheless under the covenant of works and subject to the demands of the law as a condition of this covenant. Since the law is weak through the flesh, they are all under the curse from which Christ has delivered believers.

Thirdly, the believers of the Old Testament were subject to the ceremonial law, not as a judgment upon sin, but as a loving guide and schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, so that believers greatly rejoiced in this, thanked the Lord for it, and observed it with great delight. They were, however, not under the demands of the law as a condition of the covenant of works, for they were under the covenant of grace. They had Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, as their justification, and they had the same faith, the same Spirit, and the same sanctification for which the law was their delightful rule of life—as is also true today. The texts which have been advanced do not establish a contradiction between the Old and New Testaments, but a contrast which is relational in nature and is common to believers in both eras. They were not under the law as to its demands, be rather as a rule of life.

If you apply these answers to every text in question, it will be satisfactory. We shall now consider each text individually.

A. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

Answer (1) There is no contrast here between the Old and New Testaments, for all the ungodly are also now not under the old dispensation, but under the new. There is also no contrast between believers of the Old and New Testaments, for then, according to this text, believers of the Old Testament must all have been under the dominion of sin; this our opposition will not admit. This of necessity nullifies the argument, for the entire proposition rests upon the fact that believers in the New Testament dispensation are free from the law. If they wish to include believers of the Old Testament here by maintaining that all believers of all times have been under grace, and thus were not under the law, then all believers of the Old Testament have likewise not been under the law. They would thus unravel their own proposition, for they will not admit this to be so for Old Testament believers.

(2) The contrast is here between the converted and the unconverted. The unconverted are under the law as consisting of the demands of the covenant of works, and are thus under the curse. Believers, however, are under the covenant of grace in which they are freely justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. They are the objects of unconditional and free grace, so that they are free from the curse, bondage, and dominion of sin. Christ has made them free from the condemning power of the law, and those whom He justifies He also sanctifies. He regenerates them, and that life has dominion over death. Thus, *not to be under the law* is equivalent to not being under the covenant of works, not to be under the condemning power of the law, and not to be under the demands of the law as a condition upon which salvation is to be acquired. There is neither a connection here, nor can it be deduced that those who are not under the covenant of works—and thus not under the demands of the law as being its condition—are therefore also free from the law as a rule according to which one lives a life of holiness.

B. “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6).

Answer: For the same reasons given in reference to Rom 6:14, there is here also no contrast between the Old and New Testaments nor between believers from each era. The covenant of works is the *first* husband under which believers were prior to their conversion. However, Christ has delivered them from their obligation to their *first* husband (the covenant of works), and having been translated into the covenant of grace they have died to this former husband, and he no longer has power to condemn them.

They are now under a different husband, Christ, having received Him by faith. Having thus been set free, however, they now (by reason of a new spiritual principle) serve in newness of spirit, in true holiness—and not in the oldness of the letter, in the old manner; that is, as unconverted, under the covenant of works, and motivated to external religion by fear for damnation. Thus, to die to the law does not set one free from the law as a rule of life, but obligates one to live according to it in newness of Spirit.

C. “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal 3:23-25). It is expressly stated here that those who believe are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster.

Answer (1) It must *first* be determined whether the apostle understood “schoolmaster” to refer to the moral law, for otherwise the entire argument falls apart. We deny this, for the moral law, when considered independently, makes no mention of Christ whatsoever. It does not reveal Christ and thus it can also not lead to Christ; its language is: “Do this.” The apostle specifically has the ceremonial laws in view which the Jews intermingled with the moral law, as if they were of one and the same nature. They sought to be justified by observing it. They, now having been converted to Christ and acknowledging Him as the Messiah, nevertheless wanted to return to the ceremonies—to circumcision and the feast days—in order to be justified thereby. This is evident throughout the entire letter. The apostle deals with them in reference to their views and demonstrates that one cannot be justified by the works of the law, but that justification is through Christ.

(2) In regard to these verses, the apostle wishes to say thereby that prior to Christ the Jews needed the ceremonial laws to lead them to Christ (whom the ceremonies typified) and to cause them to believe in Him. Christ having come, however, we no longer need the ceremonies since we now have the embodiment of these shadows. Therefore, Galatians, you behave yourselves foolishly by again returning to the ceremonies.

“But before faith came”—this does not refer to the act of faith whereby Christ is received, for faith was also exercised in the Old Testament. Rather, it refers to the object of faith, Christ, as coming in the flesh. “We were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith”; that is, not as being in a prison, or in a pit to prevent escape, and as if they were in an evil and wretched condition, but rather as in a safe place being occupied with a good garrison, capable of

casting out the enemy. Observe how this word is translated in the following passages: “And the peace of God ... shall *keep* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7); “Who are *kept* by the power of God” (1 Pet 1:5). Therefore “to be kept” is a blessing and a blessed condition. They were in this condition until “the faith which should afterwards be revealed,” that is, until the coming of Christ. Prior to this time the law has been “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” A schoolmaster is not a jail-warden, a keeper of a house of correction, or a guard who gets compliance by hitting, shoving, and the use of violence—thus implying that Old Testament believers were in a most wretched condition. Rather, the word *schoolmaster* is a delightful word. It is a derivative of παι=ς, παιδο&ς (*pais, paidos* = a child), and of α!γω (*ago* = I guide, or instruction). This is derived from α)γωγη& (agogae = education), and α)γωγο&ς (*agogos* = leader or guide) and παιδαγωγο&ς *paidagogos*, which is a *keeper, teacher, and director of children*. This is expressive of very kind and gentle treatment, consistent with the manner in which one treats children. The law is a schoolmaster or guide to bring us to Christ—not the moral law when considered independently. The moral law does not reveal Christ and does not deal tenderly with men as one would lead children, but it says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things” (Gal 3:10). When the gospel is offered to someone who is under the covenant of works, then the law can indeed be the reason that someone, being terrified by the law, flees from it, and that the gospel, intercepting such a person, leads him to Christ. However, it was the task of the ceremonies, as belonging to the gospel, to lead to Christ; they led the sinner to faith in Christ. Thus the ceremonial law was a guide, a teacher, and a director of God’s children, leading them to Christ who would come “that we might be justified by faith.” That was the sweet manner in which believers were led at that time. “But after that faith is come,” that is, when Christ (to whom the ceremonies pointed) has been revealed in the flesh, “we are no longer under a schoolmaster,” that is, a tender guide unto Christ. For the ceremonies are then no longer necessary, since we have the matter itself. Therefore, whoever wishes to be guided by the ceremonies again acts foolishly.

We have dealt with this more comprehensively, since it can yield further insight into many matters. It is thus evident that these words “we are no longer under a schoolmaster” do not imply that the moral law is no longer a rule of life for us, but rather that we are no longer under the ceremonial law.

D. “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal 5:18, 23). The apostle states that they are not under the law who are led by the Spirit; they are therefore free from the law.

Answer: To be under the law is to be under the covenant of works; that is, to seek justification by the works of the law—which is not to be obtained in that manner, the law being weak through the flesh. Therefore, those who are under the law are under the curse (Gal 3:10). Thus, believers in the Old Testament were no more under the law than we are in the New Testament. They who are led by the Spirit of God are partakers of Christ and are thus free from the covenant of works and the curse. The law is not against such persons and cannot condemn them. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). It is therefore without foundation to conclude from these words, “not under the law,” and “against such there is no law,” that one must not live according to the law and that one ought not to deem it to be a rule of life. Yes, those who are led by the Spirit have the law written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:3; Jer 31:33). The Spirit thus causes them to live according to the law. It is therefore far from the truth that they ought not to live according to the law as a rule of life.

E. “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient,” etc. (1 Tim 1:9).

Answer: The apostle contrasts the righteous and the unrighteous. He says that the law has been made for the unrighteous; that is, made to condemn and terrify them. The righteous, however, being in the covenant of grace, are free from the condemning power and the curse of the law. The following conclusion is therefore incorrect: “For those for whom the law has not been designated to be a curse and to be unto condemnation, the law is also not a rule of life.” Instead, the latter remains in force and the first has been taken away by Christ.

Christ: The End of the Law and not the Abrogation of the Law

Objection #3: The law came to an end with Christ, and it therefore cannot place us under obligation. “For Christ is the end of the law” (Rom 10:4).

Answer: The apostle declares that the Jews neither knew nor sought the way unto justification. They therefore sought to establish their own righteousness, and did not attain to the righteousness of God. Subsequently, he shows what the righteousness of God is whereby one can obtain the righteousness which can abide before God, namely, Christ. The apostle does not say that the law was

terminated, abrogated, and rescinded with the coming of Christ. Far be it from me to suggest such a thing; rather, he says that Christ is the *end* of the law. *End* here means: fulfillment or completion. The law demands perfect righteousness, and judgment upon transgressors. Since man now is not able to fulfill the law and thus be justified by it, but is subject to eternal death due to transgression, Christ came and bore the punishment threatened by the law and satisfied the demands of the law. Christ placed Himself under the law and fulfilled it by active obedience, so that the law in all its demands and threats ends in Christ as having been fulfilled by Him on behalf of all the elect “for righteousness to every one that believeth.” The word *end* is also understood as perfection in 1 Tim 1:5, “Now the end of the commandment is charity.” Simply because the law with its demands and threats ends in Christ, the fulfillment, it therefore does not follow that the law ceases to be a rule of life for those who are justified.

Objection #4: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The law was given to Israel by Moses; this pertained to them. However, Christ reveals grace and truth; this pertains to us, so that we have no dealings with the law.

Answer: If we understand law to refer to the ceremonial law, it is indeed true that it does not pertain to us. It was only for Israel and could not give them the matter itself. It pointed to Christ who brings forth the grace and truth which were foreshadowed in the ceremonies. If we understand law to refer to the moral law, the meaning is as follows: Moses has given the law of the ten commandments; that is, he was the means by which the tables of the law were handed to Israel. By that law, however, no one can be justified. It does not engender grace; only Christ does this by His passive and active obedience. Thus, we do not have a contradiction here between the Old and New Testaments, but it states that which the law of Moses could not give and all that Christ does give, for Old Testament believers also had grace and truth through Christ. It is thus evident that there is not one word in the New Testament about the abrogation of the law as a rule of life.

Objection #5: Believers are now not in need of a rule of life since the Holy Spirit teaches them all things. “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2:27).

(1) Believers in the Old Testament also had the Holy Spirit and were taught and led by Him (cf. 2 Cor 4:14; Ps 143:10). Nevertheless

the law was a rule of life to them (Ps 119:98-100). Thus, to be taught by the Spirit does not exclude being led according to a rule of life.

(2) There being no need of instruction does not exclude the need for a rule of life; at most it implies that one can become acquainted with that rule by one's self.

(3) Neither does it imply that they were absolutely lacking any need of instruction anymore, for then they no longer would have any need for the entire Word of God. Why was John then so busy teaching them so many things in this letter? Rather, it means that by the anointing of the Spirit they would be able to distinguish truth from falsehood, and would not have to rely upon the views of another. What does this have to do with rejection of the law?

Objection #6: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13); "Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20). One can thus conclude as follows: God works all things in men, and if Christ lives in them, they are not in need of a rule according to which they ought to live. If we do not need to work, we also are not in need of a rule according to which we must work.

Answer (1) God, and thus Christ, did all this in true believers in the Old Testament, and yet the law was a rule unto them. It would then also not be a privilege in the New Testament.

(2) According to the view of opposing parties it would have to follow that one would now not even be in need of the rule of Christ. If, however, one needs the law of Christ in spite of the fact that He works all things in us, it does not necessarily follow that he is then not in need of the rule of the law.

(3) The apostle is speaking of the operative cause who enables to will and work, and grants life itself, not of the rule according to which one must will, work, and live. The one does not exclude the other—yes, because God works in us to will and to do, one must therefore "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

Objection #7: "... the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious. ... For if that which is done away was glorious" (2 Cor 3:6-7, 11). Here the apostle shows the difference between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is the letter and ministration of death, and has been done away with. How do those, therefore, who live by the Spirit have anything to do with the ministration of death, with the letter, and with that which has been done away with?

Answer: The apostle does not make a distinction here between

the Old and New Testaments, for also in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit regenerated the elect, and there was a ministry of the Spirit, which was the gospel. They also had the law inscribed upon the fleshly tables of the heart, apart from which they would neither have been regenerate nor be partakers of sanctification (cf. Ps 116). Rather, the apostle makes a distinction between the law (both moral and ceremonial) in an external sense as having been written with letters and administered externally, and the internal spiritual disposition and motions of the heart in faith, hope, and love. He maintains that the entire external service, unless imbued by the Spirit, is but a dead letter which killed those who went no further than the external and physical activity and were satisfied with this. This was true then, and is also true today, for what does the sound of the words of the gospel, holy baptism, and the Lord's Supper themselves avail if the Spirit does not operate by means of them? Are they then not also a dead and killing letter? Over against the external ministration as such, the apostle places the ministration imbued by the Spirit and made efficacious by Him. This also occurred in the Old Testament where the Spirit, be it more infrequently, also was active in granting illumination and conversion, causing sinners to embrace Christ (the soul of the ministry of shadows) by faith. This ministration of shadows has been done away with at the coming of Christ. Neither here nor elsewhere is this stated concerning the moral law as a rule of life. It remains in force and the Spirit still writes it upon the heart and in the understanding of the elect.

Objection #8: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3:17). We are thus under no obligation to the law whatsoever, for if one were still under obligation to the law, he would still be subject to the yoke of bondage. Then his activity would still be of a forced and compulsory nature. One is now free, however, and everything is performed out of love.

Answer (1) The Spirit was also present in the Old Testament, and thus there was also liberty at that time. Liberty is therefore not a privilege of the New Testament.

(2) Freedom is not *Belial*, that is, to be without a yoke, for then you would be free from the law of Christ; then freedom would mean to live according to your own wishes and to be left to fend for yourself. Instead, freedom here means to be free from the covenant of works, the curse, the condemning power of the law, and a state of slavery. In such a condition they once were, and all still are, who are without the Spirit. To have liberty is to be free from the ceremonial law. To do something out of love and at the

same time according to the law is not contradictory. The yoke of Christ is light and His burden is delightful, because the believer greatly desires it. They love the law which demands love, and it is therefore their meditation all the day. The law is a law of liberty; it is freedom to live according to that law. Even a pagan says: "Only that is true freedom when one is obedient to the authorities and the law." Freedom is thus to live according to the law out of love and to be delivered from the dominion of sin.

The Law of the Ten Commandments: A Perfect and Complete Rule

Question: Is the law of the ten commandments a perfect rule, or did Christ improve upon and enlarge this law, it being imperfect?

The *Papists* claim that Christ has improved the law by the addition of evangelical commandments and directives, and they in turn add their traditions to it. The *Socinians* and *Anabaptists* in essence reject the entire law, although at times they express themselves somewhat more moderately and maintain that Christ has improved and spiritualized the law, having added three other commandments to it: 1) self-denial, 2) cross-bearing, and 3) the imitation of Christ. We maintain that the law is a perfect rule in every respect.

First, this is evident from such texts which declare expressly that the law is perfect. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps 19:7); "I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps 119:96). Therefore the psalmist prayed, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Ps 119:18). When Scripture declares the law to be perfect, who would then have the audacity to say: "This is not so; the law is not perfect, but has been improved upon and enlarged; it is insufficient and the traditions of the church need to be added to it"?

Evasive Argument: "Perfect" must be translated as "undefiled." And furthermore, each commandment stands on its own, for "law" is written here in the singular. It can thus not be concluded that the ten commandments are sufficient. The word "perfect" is also understood to mean "upright," even though much may yet be lacking (Phil 3:15).

Answer (1) The literal meaning of the word in the original text is "perfect," that is, not lacking in anything. The popish translators themselves translate the word as "perfect" here. The correctness of the translation is evident from that which is added: "... converting the soul: ...making wise the simple." Thus, the law is a perfect rule.

(2) To apply this to an individual commandment of the law simply because it is stated in the singular, and thus to conclude that

the law is not regulative while making room for tradition instead, is without foundation. The psalmist does not have a single commandment in mind, but rather the law in general, which can also be expressed in the singular. The apostle also uses it in this way in Rom 7:10: “And the commandment, which was ordained to life”; he frequently uses it as such. The psalmist also uses the words “law” and “commandment” in the plural: “The statutes of the Lord ... the judgments of the Lord” (Ps 19:8-9).

(3) Even if the word “perfect” is at times applied to a person who is upright, but in whom much is lacking, it is placed in such a context that one can observe that it is stated by way of comparison and used in reference to the measure of uprightness. It can never be proven, however, that it is thus to be understood in reference to the law. Scripture speaks in an absolute sense of the word in regard to the law.

Secondly, this will be evident from such texts in which God forbids to either subtract or add anything. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deut 4:2; *cf.* Deut 12:32); “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19). From Deut 4:10-13 it is evident that Moses is speaking of the moral law. In forbidding any type of addition he not only includes such traditions which are diametrically opposed to the law of God, but at the same time all those traditions which one would add to the law. It would be an addition, and one is here commanded *not* to add. He not only forbids the addition of what one would deem to be the laws of God, but he forbids all additions by whatever name they may be called, the reason for this prohibition being that the law of God is perfect. His prohibition to either add or subtract is not only issued to the Jewish church, but also to the Christian church—as Christ Himself does in Matt 5:19. This furthermore is proven in the answer given to the previous question, namely, *whether the law is binding in the New Testament*.

Thirdly, this is evident from Matt 22:36-40. The Lord Jesus states the contents of the law to be its requirement of perfect love to God and one’s neighbor with the whole heart, soul, and mind. Perfection beyond this does not exist. He does not only make mention of the superior and inferior object, but also of the purest and most perfect effort and activity of man in reference to these objects, the reason being that God has commanded it in His law.

Fourthly, it is evident from such texts in which eternal life is

promised to those who keep the law. “The man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5); “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ...keep the commandments. ... Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Matt 19:16-18); “What shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law ... this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:25-26, 28). What could be required in addition to this? That upon which eternal life follows must necessarily be perfect.

Fifthly, the obedience of Christ is, without controversy, characterized by utmost perfection; however, Christ’s obedience consists of the keeping of the law as Surety for the elect, by which they obtain a perfect righteousness with which they can abide the righteous judgment of God, the righteous Judge. This is to be observed in the following passages: “For what the law could not do ... God sending His own Son ... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:3-4); “God sent forth His Son ... made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law” (Gal 4:4-5); “I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt 5:17); “So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). From all this it is evident that the law is a perfect rule.

Objection #1: Christ has commanded many matters in Matt 5 which are not commanded in the law of the ten commandments. Yes, he expressly contradicts them by saying, “Thou hast heard ...but I say unto thee ...”

Answer: Christ does not reject anything here which was commanded in the law, nor does He add anything. He also does not give a meaning to the law which departs from the meaning of the words themselves. Rather, Christ refutes the distortions of the law of which the Jews were guilty, and demonstrates what the correct meaning is. This is evident:

- (1) in verse 20 where He shows that He was opposed to the righteousness of the Pharisees—not that of the law;
- (2) from the declaration of the Lord Jesus: “Thou hast heard—not what God has said in the law—but what has been said *by them of old* (or to them of old); that is, the old distorted traditions which had made the commandment of God of none effect (Matt 15:6).
- (3) In Matt 5:43 we read, “Hate thine enemy.” This was not commanded in the law, but rather forbidden (cf. Lev 19:18; Exod 23:4-5; Prov 25:21-22). It is this the Lord Jesus demonstrates: The meaning of the law was to love one’s enemies (vs. 44). The leaving of one’s wife was not commanded in the law, but it was permitted due to the hardness of their hearts, and the parameters were well-defined.

Christ does show, however, that it was not so from the beginning, and that it may not occur, except by reason of adultery (vs. 32).

Objection #2: Christ has given a new commandment: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another” (John 13:34).

Answer: Love was commanded in the law (Matt 22:39). One must love in the New Testament because it has been commanded in the law (cf. Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; James 2:8). It is thus evident that “a new commandment” does not refer here to a commandment that did not exist previously but rather which was *renewed*, that is, presented and insisted upon anew.

Objection #3: Christ has commanded various matters which were not commanded in the law.

(1) He commands *faith in Christ*.

Answer: The law demands that one must have God as his God, which includes believing all that God says and trusting in Him in the way He prescribes. The matter is commanded in the law, but the object is revealed in the gospel, and one is commanded to believe in that object, which is Christ (Ps 2:12).

(2) He commands *self-denial*.

Answer: The law requires that we love God above all, be fully subject to Him, and obey Him. This necessarily includes self-denial. This self-denial was practiced in the Old Testament by Abraham in the sacrificing of his son; by Moses and the Levites, who did not spare their own fathers and brothers; and by Daniel and many others who forsook their own will in order to do the will of God.

(3) He commands *cross-bearing*.

Answer: This was included in having God as one’s portion and in being subject to Him. This was likewise practiced in the Old testament by Job in his patience, and by David in tolerating Shimei’s curse and enduring other afflictions (Ps 39:9). It was practiced by the church (cf. Lam 3:27-28; Mic 7:9) and it is also commanded (Prov 3:11).

(4) He commands *that we imitate Him*.

Answer: The law requires that we follow after God both in holiness and in the keeping of the Sabbath. Christ, in His obedience to the law, has given us an example for imitation. It is thus one and the same thing to obey the law and to imitate Christ in holiness. This matter has been commanded in the law, although the object of imitation is revealed in the gospel—as well in the Old as the New Testament. “Beware of Him, and obey His voice” (Exod 23:21).

(5) *The law does not require repentance*.

Answer: The law requires perfect love and holiness. This

obligates everyone, who by transgression has deviated from holiness, to repent.

The Papists destroy the law of God by their institutions, doing so under the pretense of giving *evangelical directives*. These, they claim, are indeed not commanded, but are nevertheless implied and ought to be embraced. Thus, he who does not adhere to them does not sin; however, he who does adhere to them practices holiness in a manner which exceeds the holiness resulting from the doing of the law, and he thus performs surplus works. These are: 1) celibacy, 2) blind obedience, 3) voluntary poverty, 4) life in a monastery, etc. We, on the contrary, do admit that there are indeed matters of which the performance is a matter of indifference. However, once you either do or not do it, it is no longer a matter of indifference, but one must do them in the manner and for the purpose prescribed in the law. Doing such things is neither more holy than not doing them, nor is there greater holiness implied than doing other matters which are expressly commanded or prohibited in the law. We entirely reject the notion, however, that something would have been added to the law, such as evangelical directives, which would not pertain to matters of indifference, but rather to moral issues, the performance of which would constitute a greater measure of holiness, and would merit a greater measure of glory. There are no such things as evangelical directives.

For, first of all, as there is no transgression where there is no law, there likewise is no virtue in the absence of a command. If one does things for which there is no command, they are institutions of men, of which it is said, “But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt 15:9).

Secondly, the law is perfect (as has been shown) and demands perfection of the purest sort (Matt 22:37). Therefore, there can neither be virtue nor vice, unless either commanded or prohibited.

Thirdly, some matters, which they refer to as “evangelical directives,” are indeed expressly commanded, such as 1) loving their enemies, 2) the bearing of the cross, 3) patience in enduring maltreatment, 4) purity, 5) the forsaking of all and the suffering of poverty for the name of Christ, and 6) obedience and subjection to each other—each according to his station and rank. Other matters which they recommend as evangelical directives are expressly forbidden, such as:

(1) *Blind obedience* to men; for one may not be subject to anyone except it be in the Lord and in harmony with the revealed will of God. In doing so one will serve the Lord. “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21); “With good will

doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:7); “... be not ye the servants of men” (1 Cor 7:23).

(2) *Celibacy*. God has not given the gift of abstinence to all men (cf. Matt 19:11; 1 Cor 7:36). Those who do not have the gift of abstinence are commanded to marry (1 Cor 7:36), and one, whether married or not, must be pure (1 Thess 4:4).

(3) *Voluntary poverty*. It is contrary to God’s will to squander one’s goods, cast them away without reason, or give alms in such a manner that one must live of alms himself. The apostle exhorts that everyone ought to work, and thus eat his own bread, rather than bread obtained through begging (2 Thess 3:12). If confessing Christ means that one must forsake his belongings, it is his duty to forsake everything for the sake of Christ (Matt 10:37). We have thus observed that all their evangelical directives are either no directives but commandments, or are nothing but will-worship and contrary to God’s law.

Objection #1: To abstain from marriage is not commanded in the law; instead it is recommended by way of an evangelical directive. “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment” (1 Cor 7:25, 40).

Answer: In verse 7 Paul wishes that under those circumstances, that is, a time of persecution, all believers would be as he was; namely, that they would have the gift of abstinence and would not be compelled to marry—being able to either do so or not do so according to the dictates of the moment. He gives as a reason the imminence of great persecution. To be married at such a time results in many concerns and temptations as far as spouse and children are concerned. By being unmarried, one was free from all this. He therefore advised to remain unmarried if one has the gift of abstinence—not because the one state was more holy than the other, but because it would be more convenient during the present distress. “I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress; nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh” (1 Cor 7:26, 28). During that time frame he deemed those who were unmarried to be happier; that is, they would have it much easier during times of persecution—which is something everyone will agree with. When he says that he has no commandment from the Lord, he thereby declares that he had no express command as to what ought or ought not to be done as far as marriage was concerned in the case of persecution. In such a case, one needed to conduct himself most prudently and he thus judges it to be the most prudent thing not to marry at such a time. He declares that he has the Spirit (vs. 40) and that by the Spirit he had light and

wisdom to judge what would be best in such a case. Thus, there is nothing here in support of evangelical directives. The law demands prudence.

Objection #2: The apostles were unmarried.

Answer: What does this prove? Must all men therefore remain unmarried? Ought all daughters not to marry, and must ministers then remain unmarried? Or ought they to leave their wives even though God hates this (Mal 2:16) and even though they who are married are not to seek for dissolution (1 Cor 7:27)? Who can tie all this together? Furthermore, all apostles were not unmarried. “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas” (1 Cor 9:5). The Lord Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law (Matt 8:14).

Objection #3: “There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Matt 19:12).

Answer: The Lord Jesus speaks of those who have the gift of abstinence and have the intent not to marry as long as they have the gift of abstinence in order that they may serve God more freely and be less restricted during times of persecution—which is evident from verses 11 and 12. What support does this lend to their monastic vows?

Objection #4: “Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (Isa 56:3-5). A glorious promise is made here to eunuchs. In order to be the recipient of these glorious promises one must remain unmarried.

Answer: The text speaks of those who were robbed of their masculinity contrary to their will, and thus were not able to have children—all of which is not a special blessing. The blessing is not pronounced upon them because they were eunuchs. Rather, if they would serve the Lord, they would not be despised by the Lord as they were despised of men, and not permitted to enter into the congregation (Deut 23:1).

Objection #5: “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven” (Matt 19:21). This proves that voluntary poverty constitutes a high level of perfection.

Answer: Christ does not say that this constitutes perfection;

rather, He addresses the young man who imagined that he was perfect. Christ, having the authority to issue a command, ordered him to do so. He should have known that Christ was the Messiah, and thus God. He therefore should have obeyed. This was therefore not an evangelical directive, but rather a command. This was not a command for all men, but a specific command to this man in order to convince him that, instead of being perfect, he idolized his belongings. When it is said in Mark 10:21 that Jesus loved him, this was not because he sold everything, for this he did not do. Rather, He loved him for his sincere desire to be saved, even though he did not know the way, for it was said, “One thing thou lackest.” This does not imply that he was perfect, except for that; rather, he presupposed this in his imagination, and it needed to be shown to him that he yet lacked everything: obedience and faith in Christ.

Perfect Compliance with the Law Not Attainable in This Life

Question: Can man perfectly obey the law of God?

The Papists answer in the affirmative, and in addition to this perform superfluous works. The Socinians also answer in the affirmative. We, on the contrary, answer negatively.

This is first of all evident from express textual references. “There is no man that sinneth not” (1 Kings 8:46); “Who can understand his errors” (Ps 19:12); “In thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Ps 143:2); “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin” (Prov 20:9)? “For in many things we offend all” (James 3:2); “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). In these texts the saints speak both of God’s people and of themselves, declaring that no one is perfect, but all sin daily.

Evasive Argument: Motivated by humility, these texts make use of an elevated and lofty manner of speech, speaking of small sins and small offenses which ought not to be reckoned. Or else the saints are speaking in this way of the unconverted—whom they personify for the moment—and of the common lot of men. However, this neither implies that one cannot be perfect, nor that many are not perfect.

Answer: Such talk is nothing but untruth; it says what it says. The texts themselves, however, rebuke them. Sins are sins, regardless of whether they are great or small. He who offends in one is guilty of all; Scripture knows of no excusable sins.

Secondly, this is evident from the saints. If anyone attained to perfection in this life, then this must have been true of Noah, Abraham, Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, James, Peter, and John. They were not perfect, however, for their failures have been

recorded in Scripture. Who would dare to exalt himself above these holy men? And if perfection were to be found in popery, it ought to be found in the pope, cardinals, bishops, etc. If they were perfect, however, it would be time for them to dismiss their confessors and no more soul masses ought to be performed for them—for thereby they confess that they are not perfect.

Thirdly, this is evident from the warfare which rages between the flesh and the spirit in the best of them. “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:23-24); “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). Wherever there is a battle, there are two parties; here we have flesh and spirit. Wherever there is flesh, there is no perfection.

Fourthly, it is evident from the necessity to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12). One must pray all the petitions of the Lord’s prayer daily—if not with the same words, then the matters must be there. One must daily forgive his debtors, pray daily for daily bread, and thus also daily pray: “Forgive us our debts.” If this must be a daily occupation, it follows that one also sins daily. Where sins are no longer present, prayer for forgiveness ceases.

Objection #1: Many are said to be perfect. “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor 2:6); “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded” (Phil 3:15); “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age” (Heb 5:14). Add to this the examples of those who are said to have been perfect, such as: Noah (Gen 6:9), Job (Job 1:1), David (Ps 119:10), Hezekiah (Isa 38:3), and Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:6).

Answer (1) It is evident that the persons mentioned were not perfect in every respect, for the sins of each have been recorded, so that perfection must be understood to refer to their uprightness.

(2) There is a partial perfection which is expressive of being upright in all things and as such is the opposite of not being upright and of being hypocritical. We shall readily admit that there is such perfection—yes, he is not a believer who does not possess this, for that is the new creature (2 Cor 5:17), and the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). However, no one reaches the measure of perfection in this life. This has been demonstrated and is evident from the quoted examples themselves.

(3) There is a perfection in comparison to others who have not

made such progress. Such is true for fathers in comparison to young men and children (1 John 2:13). Of such the apostle speaks in the quoted texts.

Objection #2: Christ's yoke is easy and His commandments are not grievous. "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt 11:30) ; "...His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). It thus follows that a man can easily become perfect.

Answer (1) That which is light for a man, is indeed heavy for a child for whom it may be impossible to carry a given object. That which was easy for Adam prior to the fall, was impossible after the fall.

(2) The law in and of itself is holy, righteous, and good; there is no inherent impossibility. Rather, the difficulty is on the side of man who has brought himself into a state of impotence.

(3) The law is easy when considered from the perspective of the desire and love which the godly have for it. They are not obligated to the law against their will; rather, they rejoice that God commands them something and that they are privileged to serve God in something. The law is their delight, the rejoicing of their heart, and their song (Ps 119). Whatever one does with delight is not difficult, even though it is not done to perfection.

(4) The law is not held before them as a condition of the covenant of works and as threatening with a curse; rather, it is a rule of love. Therefore it is not difficult, cumbersome, and grievous for them, but easy and delightful, even though they fall short in all things.

Objection #3: God demands perfection and therefore it must also be obtainable, for God does not demand that which is impossible.

Answer (1) This is required from all men, and therefore all the unconverted would then be able to keep the law perfectly; this, however, the disputants will not admit.

(2) God created the human nature perfectly and thus He may demand perfection, even though man has brought himself into a state of inability due to his blindness, wickedness, and impotence.

(3) Perfection is the goal which is held before man. God stirs His children up to strive for this. He who approximates this as much as possible is in the best condition. This however is not to suggest that man can attain to the highest level of perfection in this life. A godly person will most certainly attain to this perfection held before him—however, not here, but after this life. Presently he speaks and acts as Paul does: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12).

Heaven: Not Merited by Good Works but by the Finished Work of Christ

Question: Is it possible to merit heaven by keeping the law either fully or partially?

Answer: The Papists generally answer in the affirmative. They disagree with each other as to the manner in which good works are meritorious. They maintain that there are two sorts of merits. *First*, there is a *meritum congrui*, that is, a merit of suitability or propriety. By this is understood that when man performs a good work purely by reason of his free will and own strength, without being assisted by divine grace, it then behooves God to infuse grace into the man who does his best. Secondly, there is a *meritum condigni*, that is, a merit of equivalence. This is understood to mean that when man performs a good work by the strength of his free will, being assisted by divine grace, he merits heaven by the inherent worthiness of the work, so that there is a proportionate relationship between the work and the reward. Some maintain that good works merit heaven, even if there were no promise or agreement between God and man in which God promises heaven upon good works. Others do not relate the efficacy of merits to the inherent worthiness of the work which is performed with the assistance of divine grace, but to the behavior relative to which God promises heaven upon good works. Others maintain that good works merit heaven neither in reference to the one nor to the other, but rather by reason of conjoining the two, and understand it as follows: Heaven is put on display by God as a prize, promising to those who do good works that they will attain thereto, and that man being thus engaged, due to the inherent worthiness of the work, merits heaven by reason of the righteousness of God.

The *Socinians* speak of *acceptation*. This means that God accepts a part as the whole, and thus grants heaven to man due to his good works, even though he is not perfect.

We maintain on the contrary that good works are pleasing to God, and that God rewards them graciously. Man must have both of these things in view and be motivated by both to the performance of good works. We furthermore maintain that God has decreed to bring those who will be saved to this point by way of holiness and good works. Thus, man must not expect salvation as long as he is not on the way of holiness. We also maintain that God, having promised this and in accordance with His truthfulness, will give this heaven, merited by Christ, to those whom He sanctifies. And since He is faithful, it is also right and righteous that He would give it to them. We deny, however, that good works

are meritorious by reason of some inherent worthiness. The proofs for this are:

First, everyone will have to agree that whatever is to be meritorious by reason of inherent worthiness, must have these qualifications:

(1) It must be something which one was not obligated to do and originated in our free will, irrespective of whether one wanted to do this or not; one would thus be able to desist therefrom without sinning.

(2) It must be one's own doing, for one cannot merit something from the same person from whom he receives that which is to be merited.

(3) It must be perfect and entirely without blemish.

(4) It must be consistent with the reward; if one were to receive more than the work deserves, that would be a gift and not be meritorious.

However, doing our works is not a matter of our own choice.

(1) If one neglects to do them, he will sin; and if he is under obligation to do them, he cannot merit something with them. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10; cf. Rom 8:12).

(2) Our good works are not inherent to our nature; while in the state of nature one cannot please God (Rom 8:8). Such are dead (Eph 2:1), blind (1 Cor 2:14), evil and unwilling (Rom 8:7), impotent and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16). Such a person cannot, in and of himself and by his own strength, do any good work. Therefore in order for man to do any good, it must first be given him. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it" (1 Cor 4:7); "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13); "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17); "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor 3:5).

(3) Not one of our works is perfect. In the very best of them there are deficiencies in regard to faith, obedience, love, and zeal. It is written: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6); "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). Add to this that if man fails in one aspect, even though in the most insignificant circumstance, he is guilty in all (James 2:10).

(4) There neither is nor can be an internal and truly proportional relationship between the work of man and heaven. For there is no comparison between the finite and the infinite, nor between that which is temporal and that which is eternal (Rom 8:18).

If we now consider all this together, we shall arrive at a syllogism. Whatever is to be meritorious must be something which we were under no obligation to perform. It must be our own work and be generated by our own strength. It must be perfect and be proportionate to the reward. We are, however, obligated to do good works, this obligation being all-inclusive and requiring complete perfection. However, they do not proceed from our own strength, are completely imperfect and defiled, so that our work and heaven have nothing in common. It thus follows that our good works cannot merit heaven.

Secondly, salvation is an inheritance and a gift proceeding from grace alone; it is not obtained by merit. This is to be observed in the following passages: "... inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34); "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col 3:24); "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom 6:23). If heaven could be obtained by merits, then the contrast should be as follows: As death is the wages of sin, so heaven is the wages of good works. However, the apostle shows the distinction by referring to the one as *wages* and the other as *the gift of God*. He clearly does not say that the work upon which salvation is awarded is a gift of God. Rather, he states that salvation itself is a gift of God.

Thirdly, Christ is a perfect Savior. Christ has earned and merited salvation for His people. "And I *give* unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); "... but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive *the promise of eternal inheritance*" (Heb 9:12, 15); "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). One of two things must be true: Either Christ did not merit heaven for His people, or their works do not merit heaven. Christ has merited heaven, however, and thus their works have not. And in what fashion would their works merit? Completely or partially? If completely, then Christ would be no Savior. If partially, then He would be no complete Savior. Christ is Savior, however, and He is a complete Savior. Thus, our works—

neither entirely nor partially—are of no avail as far as meriting salvation is concerned.

Evasive Argument: Christ has merited the meritoriousness of our works.

Answer: This does not amount to anything and does not unravel the fabric of our proof. If Christ has perfectly merited heaven, our works cannot be admitted as being meritorious—even if Christ were to have merited the meritoriousness of their works for them. We deny expressly that Christ has merited the meritoriousness of our works. It is ludicrous to state such a thing, for it is as much as to say: Christ’s merits beget other redeemers and saviors. It thus remains certain that works cannot merit.

The following objections are brought forth against this: 1) One is justified by works; 2) God is pleased with good works; 3) man will be judged in reference to his works; 4) man receives salvation because he is worthy of it; 5) retribution is made in response to works; 6) good works merit reward; and 7) good works are beneficial. For our answer to these objections, please refer to Volume 2, chapter 34, on *Justification*.

Final Exhortation to Observe the Law Diligently as a Rule of Life

All that has been considered in the foregoing is not merely for the acquisition of knowledge, but is to be practiced.

First, if the law is a perfect rule of life for us, then learn to understand the law in its comprehensive and spiritual nature. Let it be your prayer: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Ps 119:18). Read it over and over again, and search out in the Word of God all that is comprehended under the law. Meditate and reflect continually upon the law until it be clear to you and you acquire a habitual inclination toward the law. May you thus continually focus on it in your entire conduct and permit yourself to be continually illuminated by that light.

Secondly, continually hold this law before you as being the will of God; approve of it, love it, obediently subject yourself to it, and in your entire conduct behave yourself according to this rule, and keep it in view as a carpenter does his blueprint.

Thirdly, examine yourself daily by means of this law, and ascertain which commandment you have transgressed and which commandment you have observed; this will humble you. You will thereby become more careful in the future, it will cause you to pray for the guidance of the Spirit, and Jesus will become all the more precious to you.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

The First Commandment

Prior to proceeding with an exposition of each individual commandment, some matters need to be noted by way of preface.

God's Gift of the Law to Man: The Manifestation of His Character

Just as God has created in man the knowledge of a Godhead, He has likewise given him an innate knowledge of the will of God. Both are, however, very obscure and entirely imperfect in man, and due to continual sinning they become even more obscure. The knowledge that one must abstain from evil and do that which is good remains in all men. However, what constitutes evil and good is more clearly discerned by one than by another. The most intelligent and virtuous among men neither know all that God has commanded and prohibited, nor the manner of observance. Paul himself says: "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom 7:7). It is as if the law of nature has been recorded in writing upon a slate, which has been wiped off with the hand so that here and there a sentence, some words, or letters are left, but the rest has become illegible. The heathen are acquainted with an occasional commandment. However, other commandments, as well as the manner in which they are to be observed, are mostly unknown to them (cf. vol. 1, ch. 1). The Lord has perfectly revealed the law of the ten commandments to His church, and partakers of the covenant are obligated to live accordingly. We must therefore not make the dim light of nature to be the judge which determines which commandments we are and are not obligated to observe. Nor ought it to be a touchstone determining whether or not they pertain to us (and are thus binding for us) simply because reason—

that is, the dim light of nature—judges it to be so. Rather, it is so because God as Lawgiver commands it to be so, and we must judge by means of the law declared on Sinai what the conduct of all men (heathens as well as Christians) ought to be, as well as what sin and virtue are—all of which nature and reason should have taught them. Our reason even originates with God and He declares by means of it what His will is. Thus, the heathen must judge as to whether a matter is evil, not because their reason affirms it to be so, but because God wills it and makes His will known to them by means of their reason, that is, by means of the light of nature.

God is holy and therefore cannot but demand holiness from man. Some ordinances which God has prescribed to man have proceeded from *the sovereign will* of God, so that He would have been free not to have given them. Having given them, they are thus good, and man is under obligation to observe them solely because it pleases the sovereign Lawgiver. Such was the command given to Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and the ceremonial laws were of this nature. However, as it is commensurate with the nature of God and of the reasonable creature that there be an obligation to be obedient to God and to have commandments by which the creature obey God, it likewise issues forth from *the character of God* that man have such commandments, as comprehended in the ten commandments, to be the measure of man's holiness. This holiness is the image of God; that is, the harmony with the communicable attributes of God. It was therefore not possible for God—having thus created man in harmony with His holy nature—to either gift or command man contrary to His nature, so that man, created in His image, would hate Him, not serve Him or only serve Him in a physical sense, dishonor Him, and not publicly and corporately call upon and glorify Him. He could not have created the bearer of His image to be disobedient to authorities and parents, evil, immoral, and impure; either publicly or secretly rob his neighbor, harm the reputation of his neighbor, lie, and have a dissatisfied heart which seeks its fulfillment in that which is tangible. For all of this is contrary to the holy character of God, whose image the perfect nature of man bore. If man were still perfect, he would understand all this clearly; that is, that the ten commandments in their entirety, as well as individually, are not only law merely because God willed it to be so, but because the will to give such a law issued forth out of His holy character. Furthermore, it was inherently righteous that the holy God gave, and was willing to give, such laws to man created after His image. It thus follows that God, consistent with His

holiness could neither relieve man from the obligation to obey, nor could He relieve him from accountability for the disobedience of a single commandment out of the ten and instead command the contrary, for then He would have denied both Himself and His holiness. Much less can any man relieve himself from his obligation toward any commandment, nor one man relieve another man, nor authorities their subjects from this obligation. If anyone were to undertake this, he would oppose God. If we were to have perfect light, then such questions as: “Why could God not have commanded this in such and such a fashion?” etc. would never arise in the heart of man, and one would observe that God has never relieved anyone from his obligation to obey any of the commandments. Whatever the corrupt intellect would issue forth in opposition to this, would then readily disappear.

Guidelines to Be Observed in Ascertaining the Meaning of the Law

The law is perfect, and man—also regenerate man—is imperfect as far as the intellect and the will are concerned. Therefore he not only needs to pray, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Ps 119:18), but he must also be very diligent in acquiring a more thorough knowledge of the law in order that he may discern the holiness comprehended in it, have a clear knowledge of his transgression, humble himself due to this, have a higher esteem for Christ’s satisfaction and live more purely in accordance with it. It is thus needful that man does not merely focus on the words of the law in the brevity of its presentation without moving beyond this, but he must painstakingly search out all that is comprehended in those brief statements. To that end it will be useful to have the following guidelines at his disposal while thus engaged.

First, *the content of the law is love toward God and our neighbor* (Matt 22:37; Rom 13:8-10). Therefore mere observance of the law is not sufficient; rather, it must all be done out of love. God and the neighbor are not placed on the same level, but God is infinitely above man and thus love to God must exceed love to the neighbor. Love to the neighbor must flow out of love to God. If the exercise of love to the neighbor were to conflict with the exercise of love toward God, love to the neighbor must yield to love for God. We must love and obey father and mother; however, if in time of persecution, attachment to them prevents us from confessing God, in such a case—and in that respect alone—we must have no contact with them, but rather depart from them.

Secondly, *the law is spiritual* (Rom 7:14), and “God is a Spirit”

(John 4:24). Therefore external and physical activity does not suffice, but our entire conduct must involve soul, mind, will, and affections—and all of this in a perfect, holy, and spiritual manner. The motivating principle, as well as the manner and purpose of observance must be perfectly spiritual, and thus, the involvement of body and soul are required in the obedience of the law. “Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:20).

Thirdly, *each commandment implies a prohibition and each prohibition a command*. He who does not kill has not observed the sixth commandment; instead, as much as he is able, he must preserve the life of his neighbor and live in love and peace with him. Neither has the eighth commandment been observed by not stealing; rather, he must preserve the belongings of his neighbor and assist him in doing so. He also has not observed the ninth commandment who merely does not bear false witness; rather, it implies the promotion of the honor of his neighbor.

Fourthly, *the imperative commands are always binding in reference to a particular object; however, the prohibitive commands are binding without exception*. An orphan cannot honor his father and mother, for they do not exist. God and the neighbor are, however, always present, and therefore there is no instance in which he may behave himself improperly toward either one of them.

Fifthly, when a virtue is commanded and a vice forbidden, *then all virtues and vices which are of the same nature are simultaneously commanded and forbidden*. The measure of something does not alter its nature. To the external also belongs the internal, and this is also true for all motives which are the basis for virtue and vice. Included in murder are hatred, envy, wrath, and vengefulness. The commandment, however, also implies the contrary: love, affection, peace, and being good-natured. Included in adultery are all immoral inclinations and deeds, but the commandment also implies the contrary: all internal and external purity, as well as concern that our neighbor be not defiled, but rather lives an unblemished life.

The Two Tables of the Law

The content of the law is love and in that respect it can be said that the entire law is one. The objects are God and our neighbor, and in consequence of this the law is divided into two commandments (Matt 22:40), and thus likewise was also recorded on two tables. It is observed in a tenfold manner and is therefore denominated the ten words or ten commandments (cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 10:4).

Concerning the tables of the law, there could be the conjecture

that since they were written upon both sides, there was no distinction made between the commandments and they were thus recorded in a continual and sequential manner—the suggestion being that as much as possible had been written on one table, the remainder being written upon the other table without making an interruption at a certain commandment, the second and fourth commandment being very long. This is not credible at all, however, for then everything could have been written upon one table. It is also not credible that five commandments were written upon each table. Rather, it is obvious that the commandments upon each table are distinct as far as content is concerned.

The first four are those that have reference to God and are recorded on the first table. The commandments having reference to our neighbor, being the latter six, are recorded upon the second table. This is, first of all, to be observed in Matt 22:38-39, where the Lord Jesus makes a distinction between the tables according to their content, and in reference to God and our neighbor. *Secondly*, this is evident from Eph 6:2, where the fifth commandment is called *the first commandment with promise*. This cannot refer to all the commandments, for the second and fourth commandments also have promises, and it must thus be understood as the first commandment of the second table. *Thirdly*, this is evident from Matt 19:18-19. There the commandments of the second table are enumerated and none of the first—and among them the fifth is mentioned as well.

The *Papists*, in order to more fully conceal from the common people the fact that their worship of images is idolatrous, hide the second commandment in the first and make one commandment out of them. They thus maintain that there are three commandments upon the first table, a viewpoint wherein the *Lutherans* follow them. In order to come up with ten again, they divide the tenth commandment into two commandments, and maintain that there are seven commandments on the second table.

The second commandment is a distinct commandment from the first. This is first of all evident from the fact that it commands an entirely different matter, and has an entirely different objective. The first commandment states whom we should honor and serve; the second pertains to the manner in which God is to be honored and served. It is thus possible to sin against the one and not against the other. One can serve the true God in a manner which He has not commanded, and which displeases Him. *Secondly*, it is therefore expressly separated from the first and presented as an independent commandment (Deut 4:23). *Thirdly*, there would then

only be nine commandments since the tenth commandment cannot be torn into two commandments; for:

(1) Paul comprehends it all in one, as forbidding *covetousness* (Rom 7:7).

(2) The law is recorded in both Exod 20 and Deut 5. In the one place the coveting of our neighbor's house has precedence, and in the other place the coveting of our neighbor's wife comes first. This shows that this commandment focuses only on covetousness, irrespective of the object that is coveted.

(3) It would then also be uncertain as to which would be the ninth and tenth commandment. This is inconsistent with the wisdom and clarity with which the Lawgiver speaks.

(4) Also, these two parts are not separated by a period, by which every other commandment is distinguished. Rather, there is a *colon*, which indicates that the matter is not yet finished. The fact that the words *thou shalt not covet* are repeated also renders no proof. Furthermore, a different word for "coveting" is used in Deut 5 which also means "to covet"; however, this occurs frequently in God's Word, and the latter usage is frequently an explanation and enlargement of the first usage. For instance, in the second commandment we find: *to make, to bow down, and to serve*. Also in Josh 1:5-6 we read, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage."

The Preamble of the Law

The preamble of the law is a very remarkable and powerful incentive for obedience. Three specific things are to be noted in it: 1) *who* is giving the law; 2) what *relationship* there is between the Lawgiver and those to whom He gives the law; and 3) an alluring *incentive*.

First, He who is the *Lawgiver* proclaims His Name, and by His Name demonstrates His authority, in order to incite attention, reverence, and obedience. *I am Jehovah*. I, who am speaking to you, am *Jehovah*, the eternal God who is, who was, and who shall be. I am the living God who lives from eternity to eternity, who has given life and being to all and to whatever lives; and who maintains and governs all by My influence. I am worthy of all honor, service, and obedience. It is the felicity of rational creatures to know, honor, fear, and serve Me as *Jehovah*. I, *Jehovah*, am the only Lawgiver who can save and destroy. Therefore, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isa 1:2).

Secondly, the Lord adds a word to this which makes known the *relationship* and connection there is between Him and the church.

“I am thy God.” I, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have chosen you to be a peculiar people unto Me. I have offered My covenant to you in the Son and by the Holy Spirit have brought you under the bond of the covenant. You have given Me your hand and you have entered into a covenant with Me; you have chosen Me to be your God. It is thus My prerogative to give laws to you, to direct you, and you are obligated to obey Me by virtue of the covenant of grace. Therefore, “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of My mouth” (Deut 32:1).

Thirdly, an *incentive* is added to this which is derived from the benevolence He so recently had manifested toward them. “... which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 20:1-2). You were strangers in Egypt and were oppressed and treated very harshly there, and there was no deliverance. I took you by the hand, however, and delivered you by a strong hand. I plagued your enemies and put them to death in the Red Sea. You, however, I led dry-shod through it and liberated you in order to give you that desirable country as an inheritance. Should you then not fear Me and give heed to My voice? This is fitting and places you under obligation. “... that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74-75).

The Exposition of the First Commandment

We have now arrived at the exposition of each commandment in particular. We shall begin with the *first commandment*: “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” There are no other Gods besides the Lord our God. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God” (1 Cor 8:5-6). The angels are called gods since in a certain sense there is a reflection of God in them as far as glory, power, and wisdom, etc. is concerned (Ps 8:6). Governmental authorities are also denominated as gods, since something of God is reflected in them as far as having dominion over others (Ps 82:6). Furthermore, men fabricate creatures whom they honor and serve as gods. Even the devil is called the god of this world due to the power he exercises over this evil world (2 Cor 4:4).

Since man is so obsessed and concerned to satisfy the desires of his belly, the belly is also called a god (Phil 3:19). All of these are rejected here as objects that are to be honored, feared, served, and trusted as God, and from whom any good is to be expected.

God forbids us here to have any other gods before Him. God is present among His people; He looks upon them and they upon Him. Therefore, the fact that this sin is committed in the presence of God, greatly aggravates it. The more extraordinary, clear, and glorious this presence is, the more abominable this sin is. In the place where God is served and by a people in whose midst He resides, no sin is more heinous than to put something in the place of God or to have something besides God which one honors and serves as God.

In every commandment there is something which is commanded and something which is prohibited—and thus also in this commandment. We shall therefore first present what the prohibited sins are and then the commanded virtues. The prohibited vices are the following:

Atheism Forbidden

The first sin is *atheism*; that is, *the denial of God, ungodliness, and being estranged from God*. The knowledge and acknowledgment of a Godhead is as innate to man as his rationality. As the rationality of one man is more distinct and more exercised than in other men, and as some are without reasoning ability, and are insane due to alcoholism, brain damage, or another indisposition, and all rationality seemingly almost lost, the natural knowledge of God is likewise more clear in one than in another. Moreover, many have very much darkened or nearly extinguished this natural knowledge due to yielding to ungodliness, continual sinning against light, and by contending with God. Nevertheless, a spark always remains in the heart which now and then, contrary to their will, manifests itself.

To this atheism belongs *forgetting God and not retaining God in our knowledge*; that is, not to continually focus our attention upon God. If it be that one yet remembers Him, His attributes still make no impression and have no effect upon the heart. It neither draws him away from sin nor motivates him to conduct himself in love, filial fear, and obedience, to which the perfections of God obligate him. In short, it is to live—be it for a shorter or longer time—as if there were no God, or as if God is not the God who He is. (Concerning atheism see volume 2, chapter 43).

Idolatry Forbidden

The second sin is *idolatry*. One can divide this sin into three categories: blatant, moderate, and refined idolatry.

Blatant idolatry is the setting up of something in the stead of God, or to esteem, honor, and serve something as God as if it were God Himself. Such blatant idolatry is not even found among the

heathen, who indeed have their secondary gods, but who acknowledge a Godhead superior to that, whom they served as the unknown God (Acts 17:23). *Nescio quis Deus*: a God has made heaven and earth, but *I do not know who He is*. Such is the confession of a pagan. Even when the heathen honor and serve an image, they nevertheless know that this image is not God Himself. Rather, they want to depict God by this and deem Him to be present in and near that image. They also consider it to be pleasing to Him to be served in this manner. This blatant idolatry is committed, however, by popery in the worship of the wafer in their mass, for they deem the wafer to be God Himself. They themselves admit that if the wafer is not God, they are then the most abominable idolaters of the world—which indeed they are, for it is not God.

A *less blatant form of idolatry* is when one designates something alongside of God to which he renders divine honor. Such was and is the idolatry of the heathen (cf. Rom 1:25; Gal 4:8; 1 John 5:21). They formerly had their Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, and countless others, who either had been humans, or who had been fabricated and deified by them. The papists imitate them by also worshiping angels, deceased persons, or imaginary objects, rendering them divine honor if the pope has declared them to be holy and placed them among the number of saints to be worshiped.

The Worship of Angels and Deceased Saints Denounced

Question: May and must angels and deceased saints be worshiped?

Answer: Papists make a distinction between λατρει/α (*latreia*), δουλει/α (*douleia*), and υ(περδουλει/α (*hyperdouleia*). *Latreia*, so they say, is a service which one may only render toward God. *Douleia* is a service which one must render to angels and deceased saints. *Hyperdouleia* is a service on a somewhat higher plane than the service of angels and saints, and which they render to the human nature of Christ and the Virgin Mary. They answer the question in the affirmative, maintaining that one must worship angels and the saints with *douleia*, and the human nature of Christ and the Virgin Mary with *hyperdouleia*—supplicating them for help, the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, and salvation. They also manifest this distinction by their practice.

The *Socinians*, believing that Christ is not the eternal God, but only a mere man in nature, worship Him because He has been so highly exalted by God and has been made to be a god. In order to conceal their idolatry, they make a distinction between *worship* and *invocation*. They insist that the Father as the supreme God must be

worshiped; however, they insist that invocation is inferior and may and must be practiced toward Christ.

As far as the popish distinction is concerned, we maintain that this distinction of words is but a vain fabrication, which is neither to be found among the Greek writers nor in God's Word. Yes, if one were to consider these words etymologically, *douleia* would be a much higher level of service than *latreia*, for *douleia* is a service which serfs render to their masters, and *latreia* is a service which a hired servant renders for wages. Scripture knows of no such distinction. Not only must God be served with *latreia*, but also with *douleia*. Consider only the following passages: "Serving (δουλεῦσων, *douleuon*) the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19); "... serving ((δουλεῦοντες, *douleuontes*) the Lord" (Rom 12:11). The word *latreia* signifies both the rendering of service to creatures as well as to God: "God ... gave them up to worship (λατρεῦειν, *latreuein*) the host of heaven" (Acts 7:42); "... and worshiped and served (εὐλατρεῦσαν, *elatreusan*) the creature more than the Creator" (Rom 1:25). Yes, Scripture considers it idolatry to serve with *douleia* those who are not very God: "Ye did service (εὐδουλεῦσατε, *edouleusate*) unto them which by nature are no gods" (Gal 4:8).

The distinction made by Socinians is equally without foundation, for both worship and invocation are attributed to the Father: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (Matt 4:10); "... whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21). Also Christ is both invoked and worshiped: "... all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:2); "And they worshiped Him" (Luke 24:52); "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb 1:6).

We maintain that angels must be acknowledged as intelligent, holy, powerful, and religious spirits, whom God sends forth for the benefit of the elect (Heb 1:14). One must therefore conduct himself in a reverent and appropriate manner, and refrain from sin and from offending the children of God (*cf.* 1 Cor 11:10; Matt 18:10). We maintain that we must commemorate the lives, deeds, strife, and victories of the saints, and hold before us their holy example to be emulated by ourselves and others (*cf.* Luke 1:48; Matt 26:13; Heb 12:1). We deny with abhorrence, however, that one may and must render religious honor to either angels or saints. We shall prove this as follows:

First, we must worship God alone, thereby excluding everything that is not God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt 4:10). Two words are mentioned here: *to worship* and *to serve*. Christ, upon the demand of the devil that He worship him, answers that neither of the two are permitted,

that is, neither worship nor service. This is reserved only for the true God, for the word “only” excludes all creatures.

Evasive Argument: The word “only” is mentioned relative to “serve” and not relative to “worship.” Furthermore, service is expressed by *latreia* and not by *douleia*.

Answer (1) The word “only” refers to both and is not limited to “serve.” It is common in regular conversation as well as in Scripture that two verbs are joined with “and,” and with an adverb modifying the one, must be understood as modifying both. If one were to say, “I want you to serve me and obey me only,” this is as much as to say, “I want you to serve me only and obey me only.” Observe this in Scripture: “Only be thou strong and very courageous” (Josh 1:7). The word “only” must be understood to modify “very courageous” as well as “strong.” Likewise, the word “only” must be understood as modifying both “worship” and “serve.” These words are not joined by the adversative “but” (which would give the argument more of an appearance of validity), but by the conjunction “and,” which itself eliminates any indication of it.

(2) The fact that the word *λατρευ&σιν* (*latreusis*) is recorded here carries no weight, as we have shown. The insignificance of the distinction is all the more evident, since it is even idolatry to serve creatures with *douleia* (Gal 4:8). Thus, only God is to be served with both *latreia* and *douleia*.

Secondly, one may not render religious honor to anyone who is not God by nature, for this is idolatry. “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods” (Gal 4:8). However, the angels and saints are no gods by nature, and thus one may not serve them, not even with *douleia*, which is the word used here.

Evasive Argument: Paul speaks here of pagan idols and not of angels and saints.

Answer: The apostle makes no distinction as to whether they served pagan idols or other creatures. Rather, he makes the foundational statement that we may not serve anyone who by nature is not God. This common rule must be applied to all individual cases. Prior to engaging in worship and rendering religious honor, we are to observe whether the person whom we worship and serve is very God. If not, one may not do so, it being idolatry. It does not matter whether this is a *Jupiter* or a *Peter*, for both have this in common that they are not God by nature. Therefore neither one of them may be honored religiously, even though there is a distinction between them, the one being ungodly and the other holy.

Thirdly, in the entire Scriptures there is neither a command nor

an example, nor are there promises concerning the worship of angels and saints. God has caused all religious practice in all its particulars to be described carefully in His Word; however, there is not one word mentioned about the worship of saints or angels. The religious practice of the godly has been recorded in abundant measure; however, not one of them has worshiped angels or saints. And if someone was stirred up to do so—maybe erroneously thinking that it was the Lord Jesus—then he was rebuked and instructed (Rev 19:10). God has made rich promises to those who worship Him, but not one promise is to be found for worshipers of the saints. Therefore it is nothing but will-worship and idolatry.

Fourthly, it has been expressly forbidden. “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels” (Col 2:18); “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant” (Rev 19:10). Those who are fellow servants may not be worshiped; the angels and saints are fellow servants and therefore they may not be worshiped.

Fifthly, the angels and the saints do not have the qualifications which are required of those who are to be worshiped. They are not omniscient and do not have a specific knowledge of everyone’s need. They do not know the heart as to whether it is sincere, and they do not hear any requests. “... though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not” (Isa 63:16). They have no power to help and they do not want to be worshiped (Rev 22:8). They are not even our advocates or intercessors; this is only true of the Lord Jesus. “We have an Advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). It is thus pure idolatry.

Objection #1: We do indeed request believers to pray for us here upon earth; it is much more true that one may do so of the glorified saints in heaven.

Answer: Nowhere are the Papists so foolish as when they seek to prove this matter and the worship of images. How ashamed they ought to be if this is their entire proof (which it nearly is) for the worship of angels and saints—thus idolatry—basing their entire service of them upon so insignificant a proof! They ought to show a command, but this is not to be found, and they must therefore improvise. As far as the matter itself is concerned, are they satisfied with merely making a request to the saints in the same manner as one does to believers upon earth? Not at all. In honor of the saints, feast days are instituted, and they bow their knees and fold their hands for them, religiously supplicating them for the forgiveness of sins, holiness, salvation, and help for soul and body, in both life and death. Images are made in their honor and are erected on

altars. They bestow gifts upon them, and make the service of saints meritorious as well as efficacious for the absolution of sins and punishment. They are ten times more involved with the service of angels and saints than with the service of God. What resemblance is there then between their worship of saints and the request for believers to pray for and with them relative to a certain case—in order that God, having been supplicated by many, may also be thanked by many? There is no connection between the two whatsoever. The one practice does not consist of a mutual worship of one another; the other practice does. The one practice is commanded; the other is forbidden. In the one case men are acquainted with each other's needs and desires, and the other case they are not. In the one case there is not a devotional trusting in the other, whereas in the other there is. The first pertains to the second table and the latter to the first table. There is thus no relationship whatsoever, and therefore also no logical deduction can be made.

Objection #2: “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants” (Exod 32:13). Here Moses takes refuge to those saints.

Answer: Moses does not pray to the saints, but to God, holding before the Lord the covenant which He had made with them and in which they were included.

Objection #3: “To which of the saints wilt thou turn” (Job 5:1). Here Job is exhorted to take refuge to the saints, and thus man is permitted to do likewise.

Answer: Eliphaz declares that he would derive no advantage from the saints. He does not refer here to the saints in heaven, but to the saints upon earth, declaring that not one of them would be of the same opinion as Job.

Objection #4: “If there be a messenger with Him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom” (Job 33:23-24). Mention is here made of an angel who is said to be gracious to him, to deliver him, and to have found a ransom for him. If this is what angels do, one may also seek this from them and pray to them for it.

Answer: Mention is not made here of a heavenly angel, that is, a spirit, for then Elihu would not have said “one among a thousand,” since the least angel would have been capable of that task. Rather, the reference is here to an extraordinary minister—ministers frequently being called angels—as also the Lord Jesus was called an angel. Thus, from the word “angel” alone one cannot conclude that it represents a created spirit. This extraordinary minister

having been sent to someone (and therefore called an angel or messenger), would declare to the needy what his proper duty is and how he must humble himself when the Lord visits him with affliction, quietly bowing under the hand of God. Then it says that He—that is God, who generally is called the “He” par excellence in the book of Job—would be gracious to those who were humble and well instructed. To that messenger He would say: “Deliver, strengthen, comfort, and refresh him,” as deliverance and salvation are frequently attributed to ministers (cf. 1 Tim 4:16; James 5:20). To that end the word of reconciliation has been put in their mouths (2 Cor 5:19). The reason for this charge is as follows: I have found a ransom, and I have ordained My own Son to be a ransom by His blood. Make this known to him and strengthen him with this. His spirit, thus having been refreshed, his weak body will also be restored. No reference is thus made here to a heavenly angel whatsoever. An inference from this, as far as the worship of angels is concerned, is entirely erroneous. This is all the more evident because an angel cannot reconcile man with God and thus cannot deliver him from destruction and hell. That is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and therefore one would sooner understand this to refer to the Lord Jesus—although we do not deem this to be the meaning here. It is blasphemous to attribute reconciliation to anyone else, and it is thus a case of horrendous idolatry to worship an angel on this basis.

Objection #5: “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them” (Gen 48:16). Here this angel is expressly worshiped, and Jacob wants his name to be called upon by the lads (Hebrew: יקראו *yikkare’*).

Answer (1) The Angel is not a created angel, but the Angel of the Covenant, in whom is the name *Jehovah* (Exod 23:21). This Angel had blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he prayed to this Angel for a blessing upon the two children of Joseph.

(2) That Jacob wanted to be worshiped by these children, either in this life or after his death, is neither conveyed by these words nor by the Hebrew word *kara*, which means “to call.” Rather, he wanted these two to be accounted as his own children, and that they would be called the children of Jacob rather than of Joseph. They would thus each constitute a tribe and receive a portion of the inheritance of Canaan as well as the other children of Jacob did.

If it is idolatry to worship angels and saints, it is also foolish idolatry to render any religious honor to the bodies and remains of the saints, as well as to the cross (the wood of which they do not have anyhow), the sole of Mary’s shoe, and similar fabricated

matters. It is true that one may not dishonor the bodies of deceased saints, but rather must let them rest in the grave. However, for the living to honor the dead (Isa 8:19) and to build up the graves of the prophets as the Pharisees did (Matt 23:29) is neither commanded anywhere, nor is there a promise relative thereto. It is foolish idolatry and the miracles which one ascribes to it are fabricated and untrue. The case of the dead person who was cast into the grave of Elisha, and became alive upon touching his bones, was but an isolated incident. God permitted this as a confirmation of the prophecy prophesied by him that Israel would defeat the Syrians three times (2 Kings 13:17-20). The woman who was healed by the touching of the hem of Christ's garment, and the healing of the sick by the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15) and the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul, occurred while they were alive and not after their death. The power of healing was not inherent in these matters, but they were only signs and wonders which the Lord Himself did by the hand of the apostles for the confirmation of doctrine. However, to allow this as the reason for rendering religious honor to the remains of the saints, and to consider them as having inherent power, is outside of and contrary to the Word.

Having refuted the most blatant and less blatant forms of idolatry, we now add the third manifestation of idolatry to this—that is, refined idolatry. This exists when we depend upon and look to secondary causes or means; that is, to begin and end in them as far as our hope, fear, and trust are concerned, without looking unto God as the only Giver of our desires, and without a lively recognition that the Lord either gives or withholds the means, must bless them, or make them of none effect. One is guilty of this when he endeavors with all his might to obtain the favor of men who are able to grant our desire, or be either advantageous or detrimental to us, doing this so intently that he does not even notice that in seeking the favor of men one sins against God and loses His favor. This is also manifested when, in seeking the fulfillment of one's desire, one does not solely depend upon God and thus does not use the means conscientiously, simply because God has commanded it. One then quietly thinks that it will either happen or not come about due to secondary causes, and thus is either glad or sorrowful contingent upon whether the means appear to be for or against it. The fear of man, the favor of man, love toward men, and the love of people toward us are generally the beginning of idolatry and a wellspring for numerous idolatrous deeds. One is thus led astray by strength, soldiers, ships, confederates, money, friends, intellect, ability, power, food, drink, beauty, charm, pride,

and by whatever else he may endeavor to acquire something—or wherein he finds rest, delight, and joy. Thus, Goliath relied upon his strength, Asa upon his physician, Rabshakeh upon his mighty army, and Samson upon Delilah, etc. All of this is idolatry, for God is lost sight of. His providence and government are then secretly denied and not believed, and the focus is on the creature instead.

Witchcraft Forbidden

The third sin prohibited in this commandment is *witchcraft*, which is to perform, with the help of the devil, those things which are beyond the reach of man's ability, doing so by either making a pact with him, or by wilfully making use of some symbolic devices whereby he operates. I experienced an example of this when I was a minister in *Stavoren*.⁵ A member—an upright man—together with some others who had interest in this, wanted to know who had robbed the home of a deceased person, which they would inherit. The other honest men—men with good minds—were said to have heard that one could know this by putting a key at a certain place in the will and then to make use of it in a specified manner. They executed this procedure and thereby found the person. They did their utmost, and even used force to keep the book with the key in their hands. Upon mentioning the thief, however, it wrested itself out of their hands and would turn about several times as a top, doing so not only once, but as frequently as they would do so. Not only did they find the thief, but by the same means they also found the secret place where the loot had been buried in a garden. The people said that it was not their objective to ask the devil for counsel; rather, they had only heard that in this way they could find out things and thus made use of it as a natural means. One person related this to me the following day, I believe, as a historical fact, without realizing that he had done wrong. When I confronted him with his sin and seriously rebuked him, he was greatly frightened and humbled himself deeply, promising never to commit such a deed again, and declaring in uprightness his not having been aware that this was an evil deed. I thus perceived that the devil also carries on his work when people, who have no objective to avail themselves of him, make use of his devices and depart from the way of the Word.

It is very evident from both the Holy Scriptures and experience that there are witches and that there is witchcraft. He who does not

⁵ A village in the province of Friesland.

believe this is truly bewitched by the devil and his senses have been hardened and blinded. He then stubbornly adheres to his prejudice and blind intellect, and denies the existence of all devils and witchcraft, and will not believe this until God will command judgments to show that it is true, and it will be to their hurt. The Egyptian magicians, who changed their rods into serpents and did other strange things, confirm the existence of witches (cf. Exod 7:11; 8:18). Then there are the witch of Endor, who brought forth an apparition of Samuel (1 Sam 28:11), Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-10), and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6, 8). It is also confirmed by God's commands to put wizards to death (cf. Lev 20:27; Deut 18:11-12; Rev 21:8). It is also abundantly confirmed by the experience of people being harmed in a peculiar manner, or in the occurrence of strange things. This is not to imply that the devil can do miracles which are supernatural, for this is God's prerogative only (Ps 72:18). Rather, he understands the nature of secondary causes, knows how to make use of them, and in this way executes things which are not supernatural, but are beyond human strength. Because the cause of these activities are not known by men, they are therefore strange and miraculous to them. It is for this reason that the Frisians call a male witch a *tjoener* and a female witch a *tjoenster*, meaning one who does strange and miraculous things, for *tjoed* means miraculous and strange.

The idolatry of witchcraft is confirmed by the fact that man thereby departs from God, does not expect good from Him, nor the fulfillment of his evil desires, and turns to the devil—God's enemy—to achieve his purpose and get his way. This agrees with the well-known rhyme by *Virgil* (*Aen.* VII, 312): *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*. This means: If I cannot move God to give me my way, I shall seek the assistance of the devil.

Fortune-telling Forbidden

The fourth sin is *fortune-telling*; that is, when one, with the help of the devil, unveils contingent matters which are hidden, current, or future. The devil is acquainted with that which is current but hidden, and by the arrangement of secondary causes (of which he has better knowledge than man), he guesses that such and such will be the outcome; if he does not guess it, it will turn out wrong. He can also know many things by reason of what God has foretold in His Word. God may possibly also reveal various matters to him as a judgment upon man, who, by the fulfillment of such predictions, will increasingly believe in the devil (Exod 8:12-13). In predicting he frequently makes use of signs. My deceased father recounted to me

that a young man in *Makkum*⁶ (where my father was minister), being desirous to know who would be his wife, greeted the morning star with such ceremonies as had been taught him—which I shall not mention. Upon this a coffin was shown him, which so frightened him that he went to bed; when it became day, he asked my father to come. He told him the entire transaction and died after a day or two. Others made use of signs and predictions, and the fulfillment of them has been recounted to me in Harlingen by those who have made use of these themselves. To this belongs the prediction of the future from the lines of the hand, from searching out under which sign of the zodiac one has been born, etc. These predictions are falsehoods, drawing the heart away from God unto vanities, and therefore God has commanded that fortunetellers be put to death (cf. Lev 19:31; 20:27).

Superstition Forbidden

The fifth sin is *superstition*. This is practiced when one deems natural things to have a supernatural power or meaning, has respect for it, and is thereby either comforted or frightened. For example: one has respect for a wooden image, not daring to either break or burn it; one fears evil when the salt shaker topples over; one gives heed to dreams, and the manner in which birds fly and call. Then there are such things as the renouncing of fevers, benedictions from witches, consecrated water, wax candles, crosses, etc. “Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven” (Jer 10:2); “Neither shall ye use enchantment” (Lev 19:26).

These sins are the primary sins prohibited by this commandment.

The Virtues Enjoined in the First Commandment

The *primary virtues* enjoined in this commandment are, first of all, *to rightly know God*. It is not sufficient to know that there is a God—either by an impression received from nature or by way of deduction. Rather, the knowledge which is enjoined here is to know wherein the image of God consists. “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10). It is the internal and immediate beholding of God in His perfections by the enlightened eyes of the understanding from which all holy motions proceed. This is the knowledge by which Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27); of which Job said, “Now mine eye seeth Thee” (Job 42:5); of which Paul said, “But we all, with open face beholding

⁶ A village in the province of Friesland.

as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed unto the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18); and which is the walking in the light of God’s countenance (Ps 89:15). It is that light by which the soul, being irradiated by God Himself, loses itself in adoration, in deep reverence bows before Him, leaps up for joy, and is set aflame with love.

The second virtue is *love for God*, which consists in esteeming and exalting God far above all creatures, which become as nothing in the acknowledgment of the fullness to be found in God, and in rejoicing that God is such a God. It also consists in the pure inclination to have communion with God and to be satisfied in and with Him, to be in willing subjection under Him, to be in agreement with His will in regard to His doings and the manner in which He leads, and joyfully to live for God with the totality of one’s being. This is the great commandment (Matt 22:37); this was David’s practice: “I will love Thee, O Lord” (Ps 18:1); and to this he exhorts everyone: “O love the Lord, all ye His saints” (Ps 31:23).

The third virtue is *the fear of God*. If the soul may perceive God in His majesty, glory, and holiness, it cannot but be that the soul will tremble out of respect for God. This will manifest itself in deep humility, in the manner of approach unto God, in fellowship with God, and in giving careful heed not to conduct one’s self in a manner contrary to His will. It is to this David refers: “Fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel” (Ps 22:23); “O fear the Lord, ye His saints” (Ps 34:9); “Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him” (Ps 33:8).

The fourth virtue is *obedience*. This consists in acknowledging the Lord’s majesty and His worthiness to be obeyed, as well as an immediate subjection under God. It consists in the approbation of and joy in being subject to Him, in willingly offering to do whatever it pleases the Lord to command, in seeking His counsel in every specific situation, asking, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do,” and in the ready acceptance of the task (as being the will of God) as well as in the zealous and complete execution of the task. “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed ...” (Exod 19:5); “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam 15:22); “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exod 24:7).

The fifth virtue is *patient submission under the hand of the Lord*. This is practiced by continually looking unto God, also recognizing and acknowledging His sovereignty, and thereby seeing how appropriate it is that all bow before Him, acknowledging with delight that it is He who “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay

His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou” (Dan 4:35). Thus we surrender ourselves to Him in order that He may completely deal with us according to His will; that is, either make or break us, comfort or hide Himself from us, give us prosperity or adversity, and honor us or cause us to be despised. All of this is done without striving with the Lord or demanding a reason from Him as to why He deals in such a way with us, His sovereign will being our delight. It is to know and to be assured that all the ways of the Lord with us are right, only wise, faithful, good, and that the end will be peace. Job did this: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21); David did this: “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Ps 39:9); as well as Peter: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God” (1 Pet 5:6).

The sixth virtue is *to trust in the Lord*; that is, when considering the perfections of God—viewing Him as one’s covenant God—one looks away from everything which appears to be potentially to our detriment or benefit, or to help or hinder us, perceiving that all this has no power in itself, and that everything—both in its operation as well as its existence—is in the hand of the Lord. We then perceive that the Lord, by His influence and government, causes everything to function in such a manner as pleases Him—be it for us or against us. He changes the hearts of our friends to hate us and the hearts of our enemies to love and help us, so that all secondary causes fall away, and nothing remains but the Lord, who works everything according to His counsel and decree. One will thus be at rest in Him and be quiet without fear, being satisfied with the outcome, since it will be according to His good will toward us and according to His pleasure. We shall thus permit Him to care for us and shall depend upon Him, while using the means, because He has ordained them and desires that we shall use them. We shall use them to reach that goal and to attain to that result which is according to the Lord’s decree, and which no creature can change. David was in such a condition: “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved” (Ps 62:1-2). He exhorts others to do likewise: “Trust in the Lord, and do good; Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps 37:3, 5); “Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Ps 73:23-24).

The seventh virtue is *to honor God*. This occurs when we inwardly

(in the heart) know and recognize the perfections of God—in general, as well as each of them individually, as they immediately reveal themselves to the soul or manifest themselves in the various works of God. We honor God when we rejoice in this contemplation, delight ourselves with sweet enjoyment, and when thereby all glory of the creature disappears from view. Then in the acknowledgment of the honor and worthiness of God everything stirs within us to honor, glorify, magnify, and praise Him. This is to be observed in the following passages: “Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works” (Ps 145:2-3, 5); “Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name” (Ps 29:1-2). We honor the Lord if we dare to rely upon His omnipotence, His promised help, and His truth. It was thus that Abraham was “strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20). *Hallelujah!*

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

The Second Commandment

The second commandment requires the proper manner of worship. Each master wants to be served according to his dictates. It is neither a matter of indifference to God as to how we serve Him, nor ought we to be of the opinion that He will be pleased just so long as He is served, even if it is in a manner which is acceptable to us. No, He wishes to be served in a manner pleasing to Him and which He has prescribed to us. He indeed takes note of the manner of service as carefully as the service itself. God is a Spirit and therefore He also wishes to be served in Spirit and in truth. He has therefore given us the second commandment in addition to the first commandment in order that we would not err in this, thereby decreeing the manner whereby we must serve Him.

In this commandment we are to note 1) the matters which are prohibited and commanded, and 2) the added incentives.

The Content of the Second Commandment

First, the matter itself is presented within a covenant context. *The subject matter* pertains to graven images and likenesses—and lest an excuse be made, the matters of which we can make likenesses are distinguished and elaborated upon. Images may thus not be made of:

- (1) *that which is in heaven above*. Heaven is the residence of God, the angels, and the deceased saints. In the second heaven are the sun, moon, and stars, and in the lower heaven are clouds, hail, snow, and the birds.
- (2) *that which is in the earth*, that is, animals of all sorts, people, trees, and herbs.
- (3) *that which is in the waters under the earth*, which pertains to all

manner of creeping animals and insects, as well as all kinds of fish. By way of this delineation, all things (and thus all that exists) are excluded. All that exists is to be found in heaven, earth, or the waters—and of all that exists there, no images may be made.

There are three types of activities relative to these objects: we can 1) make them, 2) bow before them, and 3) serve them.

(1) We can *make* them. This pertains to any method by which we can make an image—be it by way of carving, sculpturing, painting, or whatever other method can be devised. This command is a command of the first table, and thus the making of images for religious purposes is forbidden, but not the making of images relative to the second table; that is, as pertaining to civil use—be it the imprints upon money, the decoration of homes, or whatever other purpose there may be (for which stipulations have also been defined). The Lord Jesus approved of the image of the emperor imprinted upon his money (Matt 22:20-21).

(2) We can *bow* before such images in a pious, worshipful, and reverent manner, be it that with such reverence one ends in the image or that one wishes to honor God thereby.

(3) We can *serve* such images. This is done when we decorate them, put them upon altars, worship them, sacrifice gold, silver, or whatever else to them, carry them about the streets, or put them on display in order that they may be honored by everyone—as well as any other manner in which one engages in any religious exercise relative to them.

The Incentives Conjoined to this Commandment

Secondly, the incentives which are conjoined to this are as follows:

The first incentive is derived from its *appropriateness*. “I am the Lord”; that is, I am an invisible and incomprehensible Spirit, and it is therefore inappropriate for Me to be served by anything that is tangible. “I am thy God”; that is, even if other nations behave themselves in this manner, then you must not imitate them for you have entered into a covenant with Me, have chosen Me to be your God, and are My people. It therefore behooves you to serve Me according to My precepts. I do not want to be served by images, and thus, you must refrain therefrom.

The second incentive is derived from the *awesome majesty of God*: “*I am a jealous God.*” A husband will take careful notice of the conduct of his wife, and if she does not behave herself appropriately, he will be overcome with jealousy and will zealously exert himself with vehement and dreadful passion to chastise her. This is likewise true for Me. I take careful notice of your conduct, and I

shall readily detect any deviations in it. My jealous anger will thus be kindled against you, and I shall punish you for dishonoring Me and for your idolatry.

The third incentive is derived from the detrimental consequences. “... *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.*” I shall not only punish the transgressor himself, but I shall also punish him in his children (which is the severest judgment upon parents), and I will do this to the third and fourth generation. God dealt in this manner with the first world, for their children who had not yet committed actual sin drowned as well as the fathers (Gen 7:21). All the descendants of Eli were punished because of his sin (1 Sam 2:31). Due to Jereboam’s sins all that had breath among his descendants were destroyed (1 Kings 14:14).

Objection: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezek 18:20).

Answer (1) Scripture does not contradict itself. God states plainly that this is the manner in which He acts, and whatever He wills not to do, He refrains from doing. In this case God promised that He would not do this.

(2) Even if the son were to be punished for the unrighteousness of his father, he is nevertheless not held accountable as if he himself had committed the sin of his father. Everyone’s commission of sin is personal, but judgment may come upon the children—not eternal judgment, but temporal judgment.

(3) Children are also sinful and thus worthy of all punishment. However, God is and can be very longsuffering. Yet if the fathers aggravate matters greatly, this will create a situation where God’s wrath may also be poured out upon the sinful children.

The fourth incentive is derived from that which is *to our benefit*. “And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” (Exod 20:5-6). Since the fall no one has been able to perfectly love God and keep His commandments, and therefore no one can be justified by the works of the law. Since the law has not been given unto justification, however, but as a rule of life for partakers of the covenant, God is pleased with the upright efforts of His children and rewards them—not meritoriously but on the basis of grace and mercy. After Nehemiah had completed the work of the Lord with great zeal in rebuilding Jerusalem and reforming the people, he said, “Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy” (Neh 13:22).

The Sins Prohibited

As we did with the previous commandment, we must first consider the sins which are prohibited, and then the virtues commanded.

The sins which are prohibited are the following:

The first sin is *the worship of images*, concerning which the following question must be considered:

Question: Are men permitted to make images of God—that is, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and of deceased saints, in order to worship and honor them, or to serve God and the saints by them?

Answer: The *Papists* are in disagreement with each other as far as their manner of *image-worship*, the one insisting that they must be worshiped, and the other that they should only be honored. The one maintains that he must literally worship the images themselves, so that in this act of worship he ends in the images themselves, whereas others maintain that it must be done figuratively, solely for the purpose of worshiping and honoring, by means of the image, the person represented by this image. They are in agreement that the making of images of the divine Persons is permissible, as well as that men are permitted to make images of the saints—images to be used in the churches for religious purposes in order to thereby honor God and the saints. The Council of Trent *commanded the worship of images* in session 25, and appealed to the second Council of Nicea, which pronounced an anathema upon all who do not worship the images of saints and who, to some degree, waver in this—yes, upon all who admit that images must be honored, but who refuse to worship them. The papists are currently embarrassed about their idolatry with their images, and seek to cover it up somewhat. They teach their people to say: “We do not worship the images, but we have them to bring thereby to memory that person whom it represents. We do not honor them for their own sake, but for the sake of the one whose image it is, whom we honor by means of these images.” However, their actions contradict their words. They perform all that can be done externally in a religious sense toward their images. They remove their hat with deep reverence, and reverently bow themselves before the images. They kneel before them and with folded hands recite the Lord’s Prayer or other prayers before them. They put them on display upon altars and adorn them with all manner of expensive decor. They light candles before images that cannot see, and celebrate a mass for them, etc. He who will not honor them is in danger of being beaten or killed. What more can the heathen do as far as their idols are concerned?

The *Lutherans* maintain that men are indeed permitted to make images, but that they may not honor them. They are only put within the church to represent sacred history, in order thereby to be stimulated to engage in religious activity.

We declare, on the contrary, that the making of images of the Trinity is absolutely forbidden. We neither know the spiritual nature of the angels nor the true physical appearance of Christ and the apostles. Thus, the images made of them are without resemblance, and it is vanity to make an image and say: That is Christ, that is Mary, that is Peter, etc. Yes, even if we had their true pictures, we may nevertheless not worship, honor, nor engage in any religious activity toward them. We may not honor Christ, Mary, Peter, and other saints in this manner. The question is twofold, and we shall refute each part individually.

In the first place, *one may make no images of God whatsoever; that is, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

First, this is absolutely forbidden in this commandment and in many other passages. Consider only the following passage: “Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves ... lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven” (Deut 4:12, 15-19). Who then, while believing the Word of God, would be so bold to act blatantly contrary to this and make images of God—a practice clearly forbidden?

Secondly, God cannot be depicted and it is therefore God’s will that such ought not to occur. “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him” (Isa 40:18).

Thirdly, it highly dishonors God. “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Rom 1:23). The Papists readily imitate this. They depict God the Father in the appearance of a man, that is, of an old man; God the Son in the appearance of a four-footed beast, that is, of a lamb; and God the Holy Spirit in the appearance of a bird, that is, a dove. They thus dishonor God as the heathen do.

Fourthly, it corrupts man. “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves ... lest ye corrupt yourselves” (Deut 4:15-16). For this prompts man to think of God—who is a Spirit, and who must be served in Spirit—in physical terms.

Objection #1: God has manifested Himself in such appearances, and therefore He may also be depicted in this manner.

Answer (1) We deny the deduction. God has expressly forbidden it and thus this is the end of all controversy.

(2) These manifestations were prophetic visions and not images, and were no manifestation of the extraordinary presence of God.

Objection #2: Both the images of God and of the saints have educational value .

Answer (1) God has nevertheless forbidden this. This is pagan thinking and we should not pretend it to be beneficial, since it is forbidden.

(2) God will not have us taught by dumb images, but by His Word. “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps 119:24, 105).

Objection #3: God has commanded the making of images, such as the brazen serpent (Num 21:8) and the cherubim in the temple (Exod 25:18; 1 Kings 6:35).

Answer: The serpent was erected at the time the Israelites had been bitten by the fiery serpents. The serpent was not a portrayal of God nor of the saints, and the making of images of them can thus not be proven by this. It was a sacrament—which must always be an external sign—conveying that all who have sinned and have been caused to fall by the devil, that old serpent, would be saved if they would look to and believe in Christ, the seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the devil (John 3:14). It was not erected in order to have honor rendered to it, for when the people began to honor it, it was crushed and destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). The cherubim as well as the palm tree associated with the temple were but shadows—just as all religious practice was conducted by way of shadows. They were neither images of God nor of the saints (which is the point of contention here), nor was honor rendered to them. Rather, they served as ornaments of that building, which, as the most glorious building upon earth, at once directed them to Christ.

The second part of the question deals with the worship of images. *May one render any religious honor to images?* The papists answer in the affirmative and we in the negative. Our reasons are as follows:

First, there is neither a command nor an example of the worship of images. Thus, it is at the very least *will-worship*, which is forbidden

in Matt 15:9. In its very essence it is idolatry, however, for it is the rendering of religious honor to that which is not God. It is already idolatry to render religious honor to angels and deceased saints, and if one then furthermore honors their image (or them by means of the image), there is a double offense.

Secondly, the worship of images has been so clearly and expressly forbidden, that it cannot be forbidden any more clearly. It is done so frequently that it is an act of the greatest obduracy and defiance imaginable to yet worship images. Out of a multitude of texts consider only the following:

(1) This commandment not only forbids the *making* of images, but also the *bowing before* and the *servicing* of them. And in order to remove every excuse, there is a delineation of the images when we read, "... any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Their images are images of that which is in heaven and upon earth. Their use is thus expressly prohibited.

(2) Add to this: "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev 26:1). The opposition makes a distinction between idols and the images of saints. This text, however, removes this excuse, for not only the making of idols for the purpose of bowing before them is forbidden, but also the making of a graven image, a standing image, or any image of stone. Their images are, however, graven images—images erected upon their altars—images of wood and stone which are placed in the street and elsewhere in order that one can bow down to them, which they indeed do.

(3) Add to this Deut 27:15: "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen." Their images are, however, graven and molten images and the work of the hands of craftsmen, and they do not only put them in secret places, but they even put them on public display. Their images are thus an abomination to the Lord and the threat which has been added is thus applicable to them.

(4) "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols" (Ps 97:7). They serve their images, however, and boast themselves of their idols, concerning which they relate so many miraculous incidents. They will thus come to shame.

Evasive Argument #1: This commandment (and all the texts which have been quoted) pertain to pagan idols, which are images

of fabricated things that either have never existed, or been designated as gods. Our images are not idols, however. They are images of things which yet exist and have existed: God, angels, Christ, Mary, and other saints—and we do not deem these images to be God. Thus, these texts do not oppose us.

Answer (1) This commandment and all the quoted texts do not make such a distinction. Even if one would have to understand the word $\lambda\sigma\pi$ (*pesel*) to refer to a pagan idol (which is nevertheless not the meaning of the word—it being the graving and sculpturing of various images), the word $\eta\nu\omega\mu\tau$ (*temunah* = a likeness) is added to it. The making of a likeness of anything that is in heaven, upon earth, or in the waters is as much forbidden as the making of an idol. Their images are likenesses of something and are thus forbidden.

(2) A heathen has never yet deemed the image which he honored to be God Himself, who has made heaven and earth, nor have they done so in reference to their deified saints. They knew quite well that they or another person had made that image. The Ephesians indeed made an express distinction between the great goddess Diana and the image which fell down from heaven (Acts 19:35).

(3) The Israelites made a golden calf, but they knew that this calf was not *Jehovah* nor had it delivered them out of Egypt. Rather, they wanted to honor God thereby and therefore said: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord” (Exod 32:4-5). They did not consider this calf to be God Himself, but instead, they wanted to honor God thereby.

(4) This calf was the image of something that existed, and yet it was an idol. It is expressly referred to as an idol: “And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands” (Acts 7:41). It is thus very evident that images are idols and that the worship of images is idolatry.

Evasive Argument #2: It is forbidden to honor images with *latreia*, but not with *douleia*.

Answer: (1) In the previous chapter we have shown this to be an invalid distinction. They ought to give proof that one may honor images with *douleia*.

(2) In the Hebrew language, no distinction is made between the honoring of God and the honoring of idols; the honoring of both is expressed with the same word.

(3) Even they themselves maintain that one must honor the image of Christ and the cross with *latreia*. Cajetan speaks in this vein (in *Not et G. Biel. lect. 49. in can. mis.*): “As far as images of

Christ are concerned, let them be worshiped with the same veneration with which Christ is worshiped, that is, with the worship of *latreia*.” Concerning the cross they say (in *Pontif. Rom. f. 205*): “The cross will be at the right hand of the apostolic legate since one is under obligation to render *latreia* to it.” Their evasive arguments are thus invalid, and therefore the thrust of the texts mentioned above is fully preserved.

Since their idolatry is so blatantly contrary to the Word of God, and they can find neither a command nor an example for their worship of images, they help themselves with the following evasive argument: “Our images are not pagan idols, nor do we worship these images.” We already have responded to this. However, to have some argument as yet, they furthermore produce these texts:

Objection #1: “And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exod 3:5-6). Here (so they say) God commanded Moses to conduct himself reverently toward the burning bush, and Moses demonstrated great veneration.

Answer: This was not an image, for it remained a bush; moreover Moses did not render honor to the bush, nor was he commanded to do so. Rather, he was charged to conduct himself reverently toward God who in an extraordinary manner revealed Himself to him in the burning bush. Moses did not cover his face for the bush, but for God, “for,” it reads, “he was afraid to look upon God.”

Objection #2: “In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Ps 5:7); “Worship at His footstool” (Ps 99:5). One is charged here to render religious honor to the temple.

Answer: The temple, and all that was to be found in it, was a shadow of Christ. When approaching unto God, one can only do so through Christ. When they therefore turned to the temple and bowed before it, they worshiped neither the temple nor God by means of the temple, nor did they render religious honor to it. By means of the shadows, however, they looked unto Christ portrayed in the temple.

Objection #3: “... before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you” (Gal 3:1). Here it is stated expressly that the Galatians had Christ set before them.

Answer: This is not stated here at all, for He was set before their eyes as being crucified among them; however, He had not been crucified in Galatia, but upon Golgotha. It is as much as to say: “Christ has been declared among you with such clarity as if He were crucified among you, as if He had been painted before your

very eyes, and as if the scene had been displayed before you.” Also here there is no instance of rendering honor.

We have thus discussed the *first* sin forbidden in this commandment: the worship of images. More sins are comprehended in this commandment, however, and we shall present them briefly.

The second sin is to have a *nonreligious disposition of heart*. This occurs when there is no impression of God, no fear of God, and no love for God; no effort to either know, seek to know, or do His will; no esteem for the Word of God or for ministers; no desire to be united with the people of God, to confess the Lord, and to live to His honor; and therefore no coming to church, or doing so only on rare occasions when one does not know what else to do, or else merely to observe or to be seen. We read of this as follows: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps 14:1); “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words” (2 Chron 36:16); “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Heb 10:25).

The third sin is *will-worship*. This consists in serving God in a manner of our own devising, or in a manner which has been suggested to us by men—doing so without concern and investigation as to the manner in which God wants to be served. We then imagine that God will be pleased with our work as long as we have a good intent to serve Him by means of that activity. The Lord Jesus rejects this in Matt 15:9.

The fourth sin is *laxity and listlessness in the performance of religious duty*. This occurs when there always seems to be an obstacle at the time for engaging in specific religious activity, and one is then satisfied if he is lawfully hindered. He goes up as a criminal to prison. It is quickly done, and, just as a child, he is glad when “amen” may be said. His conscience has then been put somewhat at ease. There is no time to read the Word of God, or if he reads it to do his duty, it is without desire and without attentiveness. He selects a short chapter or a short psalm, and is glad when he is finished with it. This will also be the case relative to public worship. For the least little reason he will stay out of church, and if he is there, he allows his thoughts to wander in all directions. He then goes to sleep and blames the minister—his preaching being so unspiritual and long. To reflect upon what has been heard, or to relate it to others, is a task which is too cumbersome and not according to custom. When the sermon is finished, all is finished.

To such it is applicable: “Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! “ (Mal 1:13); “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art

lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth” (Rev 3:15-16).

The fifth sin is *to rest in such a routine performance*. One has said his morning and evening prayer, read a chapter, been to church twice, never neglected the Lord’s Supper, and given his alms. What more is needed? All is well; I have done my duty and with this one is satisfied. One is of good courage that the Lord will take him into heaven, even though he has neither knowledge of the way of truth nor of spiritual motions. Of such the Lord says: “Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder” (Isa 29:13-14).

The sixth sin is *hypocrisy in religious practice*. We practice this when in the engagement of religious exercise we have ourselves in view so that we may be honored by men. This occurs when a minister stirs up his gifts, appears to be filled with the spirit in prayer, preaches with much fire, but with all this, his objective is to be esteemed as godly and learned and to have the praise and esteem of the people. How abominable! This occurs when a person faithfully comes to church and sits there gravely and attentively in order to gain the reputation of being pious, or sings to let his voice be heard and how well he knows the tune. This also occurs when one sighs loudly during prayer, and makes worshipful and even foolish gestures in order to be seen and heard. This takes place when a person puts on a show of being very attentive during the sermon, while in the meantime he is secretly looking about to observe whether others see him. It is also the case when one casts but little in the basket of the deacon and is desirous that it sounds as if it were a great gift. In one word, hypocrisy is to create the appearance of serving God while in reality having men in view, and thus one’s self (cf. Isa 58:2-3; Ezek 33:30-32).

The seventh sin is *to make physical representations of God in our minds*. God reveals Himself to the soul of men as a Spirit, doing so in a manner much more devoid of the physical than can be expressed. When the natural man initially thinks upon God, however, he spoils this initial reflection upon God and changes that which is spiritual into something physical. One will either seek to maintain this physical representation of God, finding delight in creating various representations of God in the mind, or it will be contrary to the will of the person engaged in thought, who wishes to have spiritual thoughts of God but cannot do so—this being caused either externally due to people speaking of God, or due to

Satan's influence upon the imagination. The latter is not the sin of the person, but of Satan; that is, if the person is only passively involved, abhorring this, and laboring to resist it (John 4:24).

The eighth sin is *to have fellowship with idolatrous religious practices*. This occurs when one goes to the mass out of curiosity for its idol (be it in their church or carried about on the street); or when one bows himself out of secret respect or reverence for their images; or if one observes the popish holidays known for their revelry (such as St. Nicholas, Three Kings, Copper Monday, Halloween, etc.) and revels, drinks, and plays likewise. One ought to follow in David's footsteps, who said, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips" (Ps 16:4).

These then are the primary sins forbidden in this commandment.

The Virtues Enjoined

The virtues enjoined in this commandment are, *first of all, the full surrender of one's self to the service of God* in all things, with all things, and at all times. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1).

Secondly, *the serving of God according to His will*; that is, our entire conduct is to be governed by the will of God as revealed to us in His Word. This engenders purity in our religious practice. "As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph 6:6-7).

Thirdly, *the serving of God with the soul*; that is, with the spirit, in a spiritual manner, and with the intellect, will, and affections. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps 103:1); "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isa 26:9); "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Fourthly, *the serving of God with a perfect heart*; that is, without a divided heart, having and seeking something in addition to God. Rather, one must wholly and solely be devoted to this, doing so with exertion of all the faculties of the soul. "... know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chron 28:9); "... they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire" (2 Chron 15:15).

Fifthly, *the serving of God with a joyful zeal*; that is, it must not be a burden, but a delight, rejoicing in the fact that God as yet wishes to be served by us. One must consider it a great privilege that he

may serve God and that He commands him to do something; he shall therefore carry it out with great earnestness and zeal. “Who maketh ... His ministers a flaming fire” (Ps 104:4); “(Be) fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11); “Be zealous therefore” (Rev 3:19).

Sixthly, *the opposing of false religion and eradication of idols and images*. Everyone must do so according to his own station. The governments are charged to do this. “... ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire” (Deut 7:5).

Moses did this to the golden calf (Exod 32:20); Hezekiah did this to images and the brazen serpent (2 Kings 18:4); and Asa did this to the dreadful idol which his mother had made, and therefore he removed his mother from being queen (1 Kings 15:13).

 CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Third Commandment

This commandment is also presented as a prohibition. It first of all consists of the matter forbidden, followed by a strong and urgent incentive.

The Focus of this Commandment: The Name of the Lord

First of all we shall consider the matter forbidden. *“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”* The object here is the name of the Lord. We understand this to refer:

- (1) to the words *Jehovah, Elohim, Lord, and God*;
- (2) to God Himself. “And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death” (Lev 24:16);
- (3) to God’s perfections: “And the Lord ... proclaimed the name of the Lord ... merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exod 34:5-6); “Save me, O God, by Thy name” (Ps 54:1); “...I will wait on Thy name” (Ps 52:9);
- (4) to God’s help: “Through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us” (Ps 44:5); “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts” (1 Sam 17:45); “The name of the Lord is a strong tower” (Prov 18:10);
- (5) to the works of God by which God manifests His glory: “How excellent is Thy name in all the earth” (Ps 8:1);
- (6) to God’s praise among the people: “Let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee” (Ps 5:11); “... what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name” (Josh 7:9).

We thus understand the name of God to refer to everything by which God reveals Himself and in which He is either praised or despised. “... to bear my name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15).

The prohibition “Thou shalt not take ... in vain” pertains to this

name. It thus pertains to saying or doing something by which God is neither honored nor acknowledged to be the God who He is, but rather is dishonored. “Vain” has the following meaning: that which is without purpose, unsuitable, thoughtless, irreverent, careless, frivolous, and without a holy objective—thereby engendering an irreverent impression of God in others.

Secondly, the incentive added to this commandment is extracted from the threat of harm: “I will not hold him guiltless.” Man may consider it to be a very insignificant matter, but God deems it to be a very great matter. Even though man is not sensitive to this and does not believe that he has committed a great sin, God considers him guilty and worthy of being punished, and He will also certainly punish him. For it is an act whereby one greatly despises God as well as a clear manifestation that he does not love God—and thus a direct affront toward God. “... with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward” (Ps 18:26).

The Sins Prohibited

The first sin prohibited is *blasphemy*. This occurs:

(1) When one ascribes something absurd to God, and with either words or gestures, despises or ridicules God, causing others to despise and ridicule Him also. “And the Israelitish woman’s son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed” (Lev 24:11).

(2) When denouncing the veracity, power, or other attributes of God, and denying and rejecting His providence, preservation, and government. “He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten. ... Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it” (Ps 10:11, 13); “What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him” (Job 21:15); “the men ... that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil” (Zeph 1:12).

(3) If one attributes to others that which properly belongs to God alone and which He alone can perform. “But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (Matt 12:24).

(4) If one despises, ridicules, distorts, and slanders the grace which God has implanted in someone as well as the manifestation of that grace—that is, if one refers to the godly as hypocrites and to their godliness as hypocrisy. The Jews thus ridiculed Christ’s confidence in God. “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias” (Matt 27:43, 47).

(5) If one denies and ridicules the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures. “That there shall come ... scoffers ... saying, Where is the promise of His coming” (2 Pet 3:3-4).

(6) If one has the name of being a partaker of the covenant, but does not live accordingly, thus causing others to blaspheme the doctrine of truth and godliness. “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (Rom 2:24); “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Pet 2:2).

Cursing The second sin is *cursing*; that is, to wish that God, the devil, thunder, or something else would manifest evil upon other people or one’s self. The saints, inspired by God’s Spirit and upon God’s command, have cursed some men (cf. Ps 35:4; 109:6, 20; 2 Kings 2:24). This is not to be imitated by others. Such curses are not prohibited in this commandment; instead, it pertains to such cursing which is done in mockery, playfully, without reflection, and proceeds out of hatred, vengefulness, or grief; or is done to confirm something and to be believed all the more fully. Forty men thus put themselves under a curse, so that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:12). This was the sin Peter committed out of fear (Matt 26:74), and in this manner Job, in sorrow, cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1). Similarly, one person can curse another person. “... they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly” (Ps 62:4); “... lest thou hear thy servant curse thee” (Eccles 7:21).

We must not give someone the opportunity to curse, and if someone curses us, we should not be disturbed, for it is not in the power of others to bring a curse upon us. “... so the curse causeless shall not come” (Prov 26:2). Rather, God will change the evil curses pronounced upon us into a blessing, as David said concerning the curse of Shimei: “Let him alone, and let him curse. ... It may be that the Lord ... will requite me good for his cursing this day” (2 Sam 16:11-12). It is indeed our duty: “Bless them that curse you” (Matt 5:44).

The third sin is *swearing unnecessarily*, when, in general association with others, we swear an oath to confirm our words, without this being necessary and required. The Lord Jesus warned against this: “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. ... Swear not at all” (Matt 5:37, 34).

The fourth sin is *to swear falsely*; that is, calling upon God’s Name—be it with or without imprecation—to confirm a matter to be true which we either do not know to be true, or which we know to be false. This also occurs if we promise to do something we do not

intend to do, or know in advance that we shall not do it. This can occur in the testimonies of a lawyer, defendant, or witness, and in accepting an office which is to be confirmed by oath. “I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name” (Zech 5:4); “And ye shall not swear by My name falsely” (Lev 19:12). God, names

The fifth sin is *perjury*. If we have sworn an oath to do something God has forbidden us to do, then we must not do so; we shall not sin by forbearing to do it. Rather, we have sinned by swearing an oath which pertains to such an evil matter. David swore that he would eradicate the house of Nabal (1 Sam 25:22) which he nevertheless did not do and was happy that he was hindered from doing so (vs. 32). If, however, we have sworn an oath which pertains to a good matter, we must be true to this oath, even if it were to cause bodily harm. “He that sweareth to his own hurt (*Hebrew: to do evil, i.e., that which is to his own detriment*), and changeth not” (Ps 15:4). Since Saul killed the Gibeonites contrary to the oath which had been made toward the Gibeonites at the time of Joshua, there came a three-year famine upon Israel (2 Sam 21:1). “Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths” (Matt 5:33).

The sixth sin is *the misuse of God’s Name*, when we carelessly, lightly, and without reverence say: “Oh Lord, oh God, oh Jesus!—doing so out of custom, when astonished, in pain, upon sneezing, in toasting someone, in countermanding poor people, in sorrow, in foolish joking to stir up laughter, or whatever the case may be. To this also belongs the reading of vain books in which God’s Name is misused; and being present unnecessarily at conversations in which God’s Name is taken in vain—as generally occurs during theater performances. To this belongs furthermore the irreverent hearing or reading of God’s Word, for not only does God speak at that time, but the Name of God is then continually mentioned. Such is also true for thoughtless prayer and when one uses the Name of the Lord as a stopgap in the absence of verbal fluency. This also occurs when we make fun of Scripture texts, using them to engender laughter and to appear humorous.

The seventh sin is *to be silent* when hearing God’s Name blasphemed. “And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it (*that is, to those who are appointed to administer punishment*), he shall bear his iniquity” (Lev 5:1); “He heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not” (Prov 29:24). We must make a distinction between the

express blaspheming of God's Name and the misuse of God's Name. The first we must make known to the authorities, or else we are accomplices in this blasphemy. The second we must rebuke with our countenance, and also with words if time and circumstances permit this; that is, if there is opportunity. We are not to make bitter the person who is guilty of misuse (due to the shame which—in his opinion—is imposed upon him in the company of others), but rather to correct him. Or else one must find an opportunity afterwards to instruct and convince him in all humility, doing so without being pedantic and wanting to have the last word. All of this easily engenders bitterness.

The eighth sin is *the abuse of casting of the lot*. The casting of the lot is an extraordinary or unusual request made to God that He would reveal His will in an important controversy which cannot be resolved by either wisdom, skill, or strength. It pertains to an issue that must be resolved, as there would otherwise be danger or great disadvantage to the country, church, or individual.

From the injunctions given it is evident that the lot may be used (cf. Lev 16:8-9; Num 26:55-56); the saints have also made use of it (Acts 1:26).

God governs the lot and permits it to be cast according to His will. This is evident from Prov 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Casting the lot is a religious activity. It is the making of a request to God and must be preceded by prayer. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship. ... And they gave forth their lots" (Acts 1:24-26). In the casting of the lot one expects the outcome to be to the glory of God and the welfare of country and church. It is thus a religious activity and must be conducted with a religious heart.

The casting of the lot is only to be done in important controversies and in the event of a significant circumstance upon which the welfare of society is contingent. It is also to be used in matters which otherwise cannot be resolved, or in matters wherein the hand of God must expressly be observed, such as the division of the land of Canaan, the selection of the two goats, and the election of the twelfth apostle. "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty" (Prov 18:18).

It seems that in the Old Testament the lot has also been used to discover the guilty party. In all likelihood Achan was singled out in this manner (Josh 7:18). This is also true for Jonathan (1 Sam 14:40-41), and Jonah (Jon 1:7). However, this is not to be

imitated. Even if Achan were singled out by the lot (which is not certain), it nevertheless occurred by divine revelation. Saul's behavior cannot be regulative, for he often did that which was not right. Finally, in Jonah's case the sailors were Gentiles.

Since the casting of the lot is a religious activity of an extraordinary nature by which important controversies are resolved, one must be fearful of abusing the lot either to satisfy curiosity, discover a secret, or neglect the use of the only rule of God's Word. The latter occurs when one asks God by means of the lot what needs to be done in doubtful cases in which he cannot make a decision, such as: whom to marry, the giving of counsel concerning a matter, the choice of a profession, whether or not one should move, etc. This would be a tempting of God and would arouse His wrath—and rather than answering by means of the lot, He could let the lot fall to your disadvantage and destruction. Abide by the Word of God and neither tempt nor provoke Him. If you cannot make a decision and are in doubt, then refrain from action, for you may not do anything except by faith. Chance, unbiblical

Games of Chance

It is thus also evident that the abuse of the lot in games, entertainment, and gambling is a dreadful abuse of the providence of God. There are games which are played solely with one's skill or strength, and there are games played together with others such as chess, checkers, handball, fencing, shuffle board, etc. These are lawful in and of themselves, but they must be played with a holy objective: to refresh a weary mind, to preserve the health of the body, or to render one more fit for his next task. It must occur neither too frequently nor too long, for then you would fail to achieve the objective. You would waste your time and the heart would be estranged from God and become attached to the game. There are also mixed games which are partly played by chance and partly by skill, such as the game of cards, backgammon, etc. These are as unlawful as games of pure chance, for the casting of the lot also rules such games. If chance is entirely against someone, his skill will be of no avail. Then there are games which are entirely dependent on chance, such as games in which dice only are used, straws are drawn, etc.

It is unlawful to play games of chance, be it all by chance or in conjunction with skill. This is evident for the following reasons:

First, there is neither a command, example, nor argument in God's Word from which one can logically deduce the legality of games of chance.

Evasive Argument #1: This can also be said of other games in which use is made of either skill or strength.

Answer: This is not so, for it is founded upon God's Word that one may rest, sleep, eat, and drink, and at the same time, may endeavor to keep soul and body in good condition in order to be fit for the service of God.

Evasive Argument #2: A game of chance can also serve that purpose.

Answer: This cannot be so, since it is nothing but sin—and a soul, if it were sensitive to sin, would be distraught. One may not draw a conclusion by relating that which is founded upon God's Word to that which is not founded upon it.

Secondly, the use of the lot is a religious activity governed by the Word of God, which states the circumstances when, the manner in which, and the purpose for which it may be used. It is a religious activity; that is, it is a seeking for guidance from the Lord and a making request that He would reveal His will. Therefore prayer precedes its use (Acts 1:24-26). It must be used in weighty circumstances wherein God's hand needs to be observed in an extraordinary manner. This was true for the selection of the two goats, the division of the land of Canaan, and the selection of a twelfth apostle. It must be done in faith, believing that the entire disposal is of the Lord (Prov 16:33), that He will reveal His will, and that one must rest in this with delight. It must also be used to settle disputes (Prov 18:18). All these dimensions are absent, however, in the game of chance, and it is thus unlawful.

Thirdly, the lot is an extraordinary means by which to discern God's will in a situation of extraordinary importance. However, in a game of chance there is neither a weighty matter to be determined, nor a dispute to be settled. One does not endeavor by such a game to know the will of God in order to be subject to it. Thus, to play a game of chance is to tempt God, and is therefore forbidden. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt 4:7). To tempt God is to depart from the ordinary way prescribed to us and to desire something extraordinary from God. It makes a mockery of God's providence and makes Him a servant of our foolish will.

Evasive Argument: The gambler may say: "I do not even think about this; I am only interested in honor and financial gain."

Answer: It is sinful to have such objectives, and it is even sinful not to think about God. One must think about God in everything. If one does not think about God in the act of lying, is it therefore no sin?

Fourthly, the outcome of the casting of the lot—which the gambler hopes to be to his advantage—is not in the hands of the

player; and yet he is hopeful. In whom does he put his hope—in the devil? No. Is it fate (which the heathen designate as an idol) as if it were able to bring something about? No. Does one expect it then from the dice? Then one designates them to be his God. It is abominable to expect any happiness from any other source but God.

Evasive Argument: The gambler may say, “I do not expect the outcome from anyone; I only look to the outcome.”

Answer: This would be the answer of the atheist; the outcome is ruled by God (Prov 16:33). It is thus inherent in the issue itself that one expects happiness from God in an extraordinary way—this being by a game. This is nothing else but a tempting of and mocking with God, and to make Him a servant of one’s lust.

Fifthly, games of chance—not due to chance itself—inherently engender harmful consequences. They draw the heart from God, which, due to His righteous judgment, is occupied with a bewitching power. If the outcome of the casting of the lot is disappointing, a silent fretfulness toward God arises in the heart, even though this may not be expressly stirred up. From this comes cursing, blaspheming, and displeasure toward the winner. The one loses his goods (be it much or little) and the other receives a profit which is corrupt and contaminated.

Sixthly, add to this the general witness of the godly and scholars of all ages, as well as of synods and imperial decrees. If there is occasionally one who favors games of chance, it is a papist or a worldly person who has no regard for the Bible. Or if there is an occasional scholar who approves, there are those who have refuted them and stopped their mouths. In doing so, such a scholar has brought a blemish upon himself and upon his other writings.

Public Lotteries

That which has been said also proves that *public lotteries, instituted by the government to support the poor or churches, are unlawful.*

First, *games of chance and lotteries* are essentially the same. The one is unlawful, and therefore, also the other. Consider therefore the reasons mentioned above as having been advanced here as well. The government’s approval of the lotteries does not change the nature of the matter. Governments are not authorized to annul divine commandments and to make an unlawful matter lawful. The legality would supposedly be derived from either the government’s approbation or from its objective. It cannot be related to the government, for one must obey God rather than man. The objective to support the poor and the churches can no more justify lotteries than Saul’s objective in sacrificing to the Lord that which

he had been prohibited to take. One must not do evil in order that good may come forth from it. A good objective must be attained in a lawful manner. The poor can also be helped in different ways, such as by charity, taxation, or other means which are founded upon God's Word. It is not even to the advantage of the poor, but rather to their detriment, for many who can scarcely earn a living, will in this way tend to poverty and must then also be supported.

Evasive Argument: Such ought not to participate in the lotteries.

Answer: They are forced by their landlord to participate in order to improve their circumstances. And if they cannot handle little, they will also not be able to handle much; everyone is obligated to preserve in an appropriate manner that which God has given him.

Secondly, lotteries take away from the one and give to the other, for many need to make a contribution and but few walk away with it—doing all this without any skill, and apart from an inheritance and other honorable means.

Evasive Argument: The money is not taken from anyone, for they all contribute voluntarily.

Answer: No opportunity ought to be given for subjects to squander their goods, for God has forbidden this.

Thirdly, participation in lotteries proceeds from the heart of a person who is not satisfied with his condition, wants to become rich, and consequently falls victim to foolish lusts. Everyone yearns for the highest prize, doing so in a way which has not been commanded in, founded upon, nor exemplified in God's Word, which teaches that the casting of the lot is a religious activity and an extraordinary means to ascertain what God's will is in a matter of dispute. This is not the objective of lotteries.

Evasive Argument #1: I participate in a religious manner; I am in need and have very limited means, and here is an opportunity to improve my condition. I expect the outcome from the Lord and pray for a blessing.

Answer: All religion is founded upon the Word of God; this is not true for lotteries. They are not a religious activity. One can therefore neither pray in faith nor expect a good outcome from God. It is a tempting of God, for one departs from the ordinary way and seeks it in an extraordinary way.

Evasive Argument #2: I do it religiously, for I give to the poor.

Answer: This is not valid. If you wish to give to the poor, give without expecting anything in return, for the poor will receive no more than a small percentage of your gain. You know in your heart that it is not your intent to give to the poor, but to acquire a good lottery ticket.

Evasive Argument #3: I have promised a good portion to the poor if I receive a favorable return from the lottery.

Answer: This is engaging in a business transaction with God: Give me this and I shall give Thee that in return. Furthermore, it is nothing more than the price for a dog and the wages of a prostitute. God does not wish to have goods deposited in the offertory-box which have been acquired unlawfully. From these reasons—together with those advanced against the playing of games of chance—it is evident that lotteries are unlawful, just as games of chance are.

Fourthly, consider also that if lotteries were lawful, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances would then be permitted to establish lotteries among themselves. Everyone could then deposit something, and thereupon cast the lot as to who will have it all. This, however, would make the godly uncomfortable and the government would not permit it. The government thus admits that the legality of lotteries, which are of a religious issue, is contingent upon their judgment, or that lotteries are inherently either unlawful or detrimental in regard to the affairs of the republic.

We have thus demonstrated which sins are prohibited in the third commandment.

The Virtues Enjoined

The *virtues* enjoined in the third commandment are the following:

First, *to speak (and want to hear others speak) of God and divine things with all humility, reverence of heart, and manifestation of respect.* It must become evident how glorious and awe-inspiring God is; and that He is worthy of being feared. Our very conduct must therefore cause others to have such an impression of God. How father Abraham humbled himself when he spoke to God! “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). Even Eglon, the king of the Moabites, showed great respect for God, for when Ehud said to him, “I have a message from God unto thee,” he “arose out of his seat” (Judg 3:20). The apostle exhorts us to speak reverently about God and divine things. “In doctrine showing ... gravity” (Titus 2:7); “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet 4:11).

Secondly, *to confess the Lord holily and boldly;* that is, we must confess that He is such a God as He is, that we are loyal to Him, honor and fear Him, put our trust in Him, and that we are loyal to His truth, cause, and children. We must furthermore confess that we are not ashamed of this, but deem it to be the greatest honor to be known for this. “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in

heaven” (Matt 10:32); “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom 1:16).

Thirdly, *to glorify God in all that we say or do*. This is to be our objective and must stimulate us to declare His virtues. “But ye are a chosen generation ... that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9); “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Col 3:17); “... do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

Fourthly, *to be zealous for His Name and cause*. This was true for Moses (Exod 23:19-20), Elijah (1 Kings 19:10), and David as a type of Christ. “For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me” (Ps 69:9).

Fifthly, *to call upon the name of the Lord*; that is, to bow reverently before Him, worship Him due to His glory, and humbly request from Him all that you have need of in every given situation—privately, or publicly with the church. “Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them” (Ps 99:6); “...My suppliants ...” (Zeph 3:10).

Sixthly, *to swear by His Name in a holy manner*. We shall dwell upon this a bit more in order that everyone may be instructed as to what an oath is, as well as all that it implies. This will be done so that everyone may examine himself in regard to the oath, and to give instruction, as well as to refute opposing parties.

The Oath

We do not understand the oath to be a general reference to all that pertains to religious practice, such as we read in Isa 19:18: “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts.” Rather, we speak of it in the narrow sense; that is, the calling on God to be a witness in a certain situation. The Heidelberg Catechism describes the oath as follows: “A lawful oath is calling upon God as the only One who knows the heart, that He will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely.”

To swear an oath is to call upon God to be a witness. “Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul” (2 Cor 1:23); “The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us” (Jer 42:5); “Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth” (Mal 2:14).

The oath is a calling upon God which renders one subject to

either a blessing or a curse. "... upon my soul" (2 Cor 1:23). Sometimes this condition is not expressed and at other times it is. "So do God to me, and more also" (2 Sam 3:35).

The form differs. At times it is: "As the Lord liveth" (1 Sam 20:21), and our form is: "So help me Almighty God!" The external form also differs; we raise the first two fingers.⁷ It is as much as if one says, "Oh omniscient, omnipotent, true, and righteous God, who dost delight in truth, whose eyes look for truth, and Thou who hatest all falsehood—Thou who knowest the truth of this matter, my heart, and this my mouth and my deeds—I pray Thee that Thou wouldest look down upon me in this case, and hear my voice, and that Thou wouldest be a witness of that which I now say and promise. I pray that Thou wouldest punish me in body and soul as an example to others, if I do not state and strictly adhere to the truth as far as I am acquainted with it (which I promise to do)—and on the contrary, bless me according to soul and body if I state the truth and am faithful to that which I promise. Let it thus be evident that Thou art an omniscient, omnipotent, true, and righteous God." Who would then not fear to swear an oath?

There are five matters which belong to a proper oath: 1) by whom one must swear; 2) who may swear; 3) the matters which are to be sworn; 4) the manner in which the oath must be sworn, and 5) the purpose for which it is performed.

First, *the One who is called upon in the oath and by whom one must swear is the only true God*. One may not swear by angels and saints as the papists maintain and do, for 1) they may not be worshiped, as has been shown earlier; 2) they do not know the heart; 3) they have no power to either bless or punish; 4) God is angry with those who swear by something other than the true God, and punishes them. "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth" (Amos 8:14); "... and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham" (Zeph 1:5).

Evasive Argument: Those were idols, and were neither angels nor saints.

Answer: The reason why it was unlawful to swear by those mentioned was because they were not God. This is always applicable, for it makes no difference who is put in the stead of God when swearing an oath.

Objection #1: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus

⁷ Such is the custom in the Netherlands until this day.

Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things” (1 Tim 5:21). Paul swears here by the angels.

Answer: No mention is made here of an oath. Paul certifies Timothy in the presence of the elect angels. We do likewise in general conversation when we say: “I believe it, I confess it, or I say it before all who are here present.”

Objection #2: Joseph swore by Pharaoh: “By the life of Pharaoh” (Gen 42:15).

Answer: One is to conduct himself according to regulations, without which examples cannot be followed. For otherwise, one could conclude from this that we may swear by a living person—yes, even by a heathen. Furthermore, there is here no calling upon Pharaoh and thus also no oath.

Secondly, *those who are permitted to swear an oath* may not be children, demented persons, drunkards, angry persons, liars, etc.—not only because they are not credible, but also because they are not capable of having a right impression concerning God and the oath, and thus they cannot swear in a godly manner. In order to swear an oath rightly, one must be illuminated, regenerate, and godly. Since we cannot judge a person’s internal state, however, all citizens are rightfully admitted to this. If they do not swear truthfully, they are responsible themselves. One thus accepts the oath of an idolatrous person and of others—not because of the quality of their oath, but due to the condition which is placed upon them. It also urges them to be faithful, and it settles disputes.

Thirdly, concerning *the matters which are to be sworn*, the following applies:

(1) These matters must be important, and it must be true that they cannot be settled in any other way (Exod 22:11).

(2) Since the oath is a public testimony, one must be very sure of the matter and be without doubt, so that the oath be in truth (Jer 4:2). “He that ... speaketh the truth in his heart” (Ps 15:2).

(3) Since these are matters which one promises to do, they must be inherently good. Evil oaths, or oaths to do evil, ought not to be made (Mark 6:23, 25-26).

(4) They must be matters which we can perform, which are within our power, of which we are conscious, and of which we are capable. Thoughtless oaths render us guilty (Lev 5:4-5). To this belong also the solemn obligations pertaining to specific promises to be faithful, it being in our power to do so. One can also add to this, promises made at baptism and at the Lord’s Supper—which are made upon the condition that the Lord gives grace and strength.

Fourthly, the manner in which one must swear must be as follows:

(1) It must be done out of love for the truth. “Therefore love the truth and peace” (Zech 8:19).

(2) It must be done with great respect for God, and while being conscious of His presence, for one speaks to God and by means of the oath calls upon God. “In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Ps 5:7).

(3) It must be done thoughtfully. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God” (Eccles 5:2).

(4) It must be done when the government requires this, or even outside the courtroom if an emergency demands it; that is, if there are no other means to settle the dispute—and thus to engender trust, so that the truth of a matter (which is of the highest significance) can be believed. “An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife” (Heb 6:16).

(5) The oath must be stated clearly and distinctly, without disguising and distorting the matter, and without ambiguity. One may thus not say something which means one thing in his mind and suggests something different to the one who hears it, the words expressed having the meaning which the hearer assumed. These practices are generally referred to as *Jesuit pranks*, since they promote and make use of such practices. An example of this would be if one were to ask someone: “Have you seen that man?” and if having seen him, he were to answer “no,” for he would understand it to refer to having seen him “on that tower,” or “flying in the air.”

Question: May not one make use of such ambiguous statements when swearing an oath or at other occasions?

Answer: The Papists answer in the affirmative and we in the negative. We do concede, however, that a person may say one truth, and be silent about another truth which is not asked. We also permit the use of words with a twofold meaning, doing so either artistically or to exercise the mind of others. Such are the riddles by which men have tested each other’s intellect of old. Such riddles we also find frequently in God’s Word, such as the riddle of Samson, the riddles of the Queen of Sheba to prove Solomon’s wisdom, as well as the riddle of Jotham, Gideon’s son, and of others. If, however, we are asked about a certain matter, or if a matter is to be confirmed by oath, we must answer clearly and distinctly in accordance with the intent of the questioner, lest he delude himself by interpreting our answer differently than we had intended, or that we would mislead him. This is evident for the following reasons :

First, to do so is lying, and the portion of liars is in the lake of fire, that is, in hell.

Evasive Argument: It is not a lie, because the words do not contradict the intent of the heart. One interprets it according to the manner in which it is said.

Answer: The circumstances at the making of an oath are such that one may not have a hidden meaning in his words. One's meaning must agree with what the words themselves suggest and be consistent with the meaning of the questioner. One not only lies if the words are contrary to what is in the heart, but he also lies if the words do not agree with the matter about which he is asked, and with which he is nevertheless acquainted. The oath is therefore restricted by those words, "without subtlety." If your answer is therefore without subtlety, you are not lying.

Secondly, to speak in this manner is to be deceitful. "The Lord will abhor the ... deceitful man" (Ps 5:6).

Evasive Argument: One is not deceitful, since he says it as he means it.

Answer: This has already been answered, for it is expressly his intent to deceive. The objective is to mislead another by his words, who accepts that word or oath at face value.

Thirdly, it renders oaths unprofitable and useless since one cannot depend on them, the oath being "an end of all strife" (Heb 6:16). It creates confusion throughout human society, for then one can believe no one else, and must always think that the person is adding something in his mind, secretly understanding it as such. All fidelity has then been removed.

Fourthly, then martyrs needed not to have suffered for the truth, for then one can answer in the affirmative to all errors, making them all to be the truth if he but gives a different meaning and intent in his mind.

Objection #1: The saints have made use of such ambiguous statements. Abraham said that Sarah was his sister.

Answer: It was the truth, for he was not asked whether she was his wife and thus he could be silent about that.

Objection #2: Samuel made an ambiguous statement when he said that he wanted to go to Bethlehem to sacrifice, since he really went there to anoint a king.

Answer: He was not asked whether he went there to anoint a king, and thus he could be silent about this. He spoke the truth when he said that he went there to sacrifice—which indeed he did.

Objection #3: Christ made as though He would have gone farther, whereas He really wished to remain with them (the men of Emmaus).

Answer: Here is no verbal ambiguity. Christ, by making as though He would go farther, wanted to give them the opportunity to request Him to enter, upon which the Lord would be willing to do so. Nothing else is meant by this.

Fifthly, *the purpose of the oath* must be the glorification of God as being omniscient, omnipotent, true, righteous, worthy of worship, and majestic. Its objective is furthermore to promote fidelity and truth and to safeguard human communication.

The Oath: Lawful for Christians

Having demonstrated what the nature and the required circumstances of the oath are, the following question presents itself:

Question: May a Christian swear an oath in the manner stated?

Answer: The Anabaptists answer negatively and we affirmatively. Our proof is as follows:

First, the oath is a vestige of the law of nature, which is evident from its use among all nations.

Secondly, it has expressly been commanded. "Thou shalt ... swear by His name" (Deut 6:13). Add to this all the cases in which God commands the use of the oath. It will not suffice here to say that this was for the Old Testament only, for it was not a ceremonial practice, but a moral practice, which is obligatory for all times. It has not been abolished anywhere in the New Testament; on the contrary, it has been used.

Thirdly, it has been prophesied that one would swear in the New Testament. "... that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isa 45:23); "... and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth" (Isa 65:16).

Evasive Argument: These texts do not refer to the swearing of oaths, but to the spiritual nature of New Testament religion.

Answer (1) The oath can therefore not be excluded, for it is an act of spiritual worship, it being a calling upon God's Name.

(2) We deny that especially in the last text mention is made of the spiritual dimension of religion; instead, it expressly speaks of the swearing of an oath. This is conveyed by the words, and the usage of the oath in the New Testament confirms this.

Fourthly, God has sworn (Heb 6:17), the angel has sworn (Rev 10:6), and Paul has sworn (cf. 2 Cor 1:23; 1 Thess 5:27). Thus, the swearing of an oath is a holy and lawful work. Add to this that the apostle determines the swearing of an oath to be a lawful matter: "For men verily swear by the greater" (Heb 6:16).

Fifthly, the purpose of an oath always remains the settling of disputes and controversies which cannot be settled in any other

way but by oath. “And an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife” (Heb 6:16). Oaths, lawful

Objection #1: The oath is dreadfully misused.

Answer: The abuse does not negate its use.

Objection #2: “But I say unto you, Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt 5:34, 37).

Answer (1) It is evident that Christ did not abolish the proper oath, for it is confirmed by the prophecies that one would swear in the New Testament.

(2) Christ refers to those oaths which the Jews were accustomed to swear. They swore by all manner of objects and made a distinction between them. “Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!” (Matt 23:18); And, “Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty” (Matt 23:18). Christ is opposed to this swearing and in reference to this He says: “Swear not at all; neither by heaven ... nor by the earth ... neither by Jerusalem ... neither shalt thou swear by thy head” (Matt 5:34-36). When the Jews swore a solemn oath, they would swear by *Jehovah*, but in common conversation they immediately had an oath ready for this or that situation. In reference to common communication Christ says, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.” It is evil to go beyond this by adding an oath each time.

(3) There can be circumstances in which one may go beyond “Yea and nay,” for Christ frequently uses the word “amen,” and “verily,” and the opposing party itself goes further than that when they confirm something by saying, “By the very truth of my manhood!” They thus cannot make use of this text here. The same answer also suffices for James 5:12, where almost the identical words are recorded.

The Need for Self-Examination due to the Solemnity of the Oath

Many will be rebuked by what has been said thus far about the oath. This is true, in the first place, for careless individuals who can hardly say anything without adding an oath, such as: “By the truth of God!” or “by my soul!” and similar dreadful expressions by which God is provoked.

Secondly, many ought to be convicted of their thoughtless and perhaps false swearing of oaths in giving of testimony. This is true for the prosecutor who summons someone to court and under oath presents evidence, for the defendant who under oath must answer to the presented evidence, as well as for the witnesses. Let

me ask you some questions, and answer them before the Lord. Did you indeed have a clear and distinct understanding of what you were going to confirm by oath? And if not, did you take the liberty to ask for the correct meaning of the evidence? Were you sure of your case? Did you proceed uprightly without distortion, ambiguity, or bias? Was the case indeed as you swore it to be? Did you swear with respect for God and out of love for the truth? Did you conduct yourself circumspectly?

Thirdly, many will thus be exposed who have taken the oath of office—which is true for many who either hold minor or major offices. Were you acquainted with the contents of each article and each word, and did you know what each article required? Were you convinced of your competence to execute all the articles, as well as each one of them individually? Was there a heartfelt determination to fulfil each of them? Did you establish these articles as a rule of conduct from the moment you took the oath, so that they were always clearly before your eyes? Have you been true to your oath in every respect? Examine yourself by these questions, and realize that God knows it. Do not take refuge to this or that excuse, for they will not exonerate you.

Evasive Argument #1: It was my general intent to be faithful.

Answer: That is not sufficient, for with such an oath many would not have been admitted to their office. If the government would have been satisfied with this, it would not have formulated and designated specific articles.

Evasive Argument #2: The oath of fidelity implies a secret condition: *as much as possible*.

Answer: If you had expressed that condition when you swore your oath, you would not have received your office. You have fabricated this condition yourself. This was not the intent of the government at all, and you should not have sworn an oath about something unless you knew yourself to be competent. And as soon as you discovered that you were not competent, you should have immediately turned over the office to another.

Evasive Argument #3: The oaths are defined in such a way that it is impossible for someone to be true to them. There is no one who faithfully observes his oath.

Answer: It is true that it is impossible to observe the oath as much as you would like. Furthermore, if it is absolutely impossible, you should neither desire the office, nor have taken the oath; or else you should resign immediately.

Evasive Argument #4: We are all weak men and we sin in all things.

Answer: One must not relegate perjury to the category of daily

weaknesses. That which has been confirmed by oath must be within the realm of our competence or else one should not take the oath. The transgression has been committed knowingly and willingly, and by reason of the oath there is solemn onus upon you for punishment—a punishment which you yourself have sought from the righteousness of God.

Consider the third commandment attentively. “The Lord shall not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.” Observe what is written in the following passages: “Or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered” (Ezek 17:15); “I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof” (Zech 5:4). Hear furthermore what the Lord says: “And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness ... against false swearers” (Mal 3:5). Therefore, you who find yourself guilty ought to fear, and make haste to repent before judgment is executed upon you. From now on, observe your oath with diligence, or let go of your office. It is better to be poor and beg for bread than to be guilty of perjury and have abundance. Be fearful of the oath, and if you are called upon to swear an oath, do not hesitate to bear witness to the truth. However, give heed that you do it in a holy manner, lest you have remorse afterwards.

 CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

The Fourth Commandment

This is the commandment which is contradicted by many, and is assaulted with highly elevated shields. If many would have had it in their power, it would have long been forgotten and rejected. As is true for all other commandments, it is still read to the congregation on every sabbath day as a rule of life, in spite of all who regret this.

The Basic Contents of this Commandment

The words of this commandment contain: 1) a short exhortation; 2) a declaration; and 3) incentives for observance.

First of all there is a short exhortation: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod 20:8).

At the very outset a *nota bene* is placed; that is, a word of great emphasis, which ought to make a deep impression upon our hearts. “Remember,” that is, see to it that you do not contradict, reject, or forget this commandment. Remember it prior to the arrival of that day in order that you may order your affairs in such a manner that nothing will hinder you; prepare yourself for this day ahead of time. Be exhorted and be warned.

The subject of this commandment is *the sabbath day*. This word is a derivative of the word τβ# (*shabat*), which means *to rest*. The word “to rest” is used to indicate the cessation of something (Josh 5:12). Νμη τβ#ψω (*Wayyishbōth haman*), that is, “And the manna ceased (*rested*).” “To rest” is also to desist from the activity with which you have been occupied, and to refresh yourself after your labor. This is said of God: “...He had rested from all His work” (Gen 2:3). Moreover, it is also said of men: “So the people rested on the seventh day” (Exod 16:30). The earth is likewise said to rest when it remains dormant, is neither plowed nor seeded, and consequently

brings forth no fruit. “Even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths” (Lev 26:34). From τβ# (*shabath*) are derived τβ# (*shabath*) and Νωτβ# (*shabath*), both of which signify rest. It also signifies a period of rest, be it when the word is used in isolation: “To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord” (Exod 16:23), or that the day or year is added to this: “What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane (τβ#η μωψ , *yōm hashshabat*) the sabbath day” (Neh 13:17). In this commandment the word “day” is added one time and not the other time.

The word “sabbath” has different connotations.

(1) It sometimes signifies *a week* of seven days or years which then terminates with the sabbath day. “Fulfil her week” (Gen 29:27).

(2) It signifies the *sabbath years* (being the seventh year) in which one was neither permitted to plow, sow, nor harvest (Lev 25:105)—and also the fiftieth year (Lev 25:10).

(3) It signifies the *sabbath of weeks*, lasting seven consecutive days, being the three feast days—Easter, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

There were also the *sabbaths of days*. These were the first and last days of the three feasts—be it that they fell upon the sabbath or upon a different day. “On the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath”⁸ (Lev 23:39); there was the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 23:27, 32); and in addition to all these, it signifies the seventh-day sabbath which has its origin in the original seventh day, and which will endure until the end of the world. It is the latter which is referred to in this commandment.

The activity being commanded relative to this day is *being sanctified*, that is, *to be set apart* for sacred use (Exod 13:2). There must also be preparation (Exod 19:11), a holy and lawful use (1 Tim 1:8), and a regarding of this day (Rom 14:6).

The Observance of the Sabbath

The second thing to be noted relative to this commandment is its *exposition or enlargement*. This pertains to 1) the time of observance, 2) the manner of observance, and 3) the persons called unto its observance.

First, the sabbath is not to be observed every three, four, ten, twenty, or thirty days—or whenever it pleases the government or the church—but on the seventh day. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the

⁸ The Statenvertaling reads: “On the first day shall be a rest and the eighth day shall be a rest.”

Lord thy God” (Exod 20:9-10). It must then be one of the seven days, and it ought not to be repeated any earlier or later.

Question: Is it immaterial which of the seven days one observes, and if not, which of the seven is the sabbath?

Answer: The commandment conveys that it is the seventh, which follows upon six days of labor. “Six days shalt thou labor.” This is not a command to work (which belongs to the second table), but a stipulation as to how long one may work, and a direction when one must cease to labor and when the sabbath begins. It says as much as that whatever we are under obligation to do must be performed in six days, for the seventh day is a time of rest; *it is the sabbath of the Lord thy God*. God rested on the seventh day and has thus given us an example. He has set this day apart for sacred purposes and has commanded man to hallow this day to the glorification of His Name. *Secondly*, the manner in which this day is to be hallowed is as follows: “Thou shalt do *no manner of work*.” We are enjoined to serve God in the first commandment, and this encompasses all our activity of soul and body at all times, during both day and night. The fourth commandment, however, requires the service of God in the full sense of the word, that is, with cessation of labor.

Not to work, or to rest, can be interpreted as doing nothing, being quiet, and being idle. It can also refer to non-activity due to an injunction of God, commanding us not to work. It can also mean 1) not to do a thing or 2) not to work so as to enable us to do something else, since we cannot do two things simultaneously; or it can also refer to resting conjoined with being engaged in a different activity.

(1) Doing no manner of work does not refer to being idle, for God cannot be pleased with idleness.

(2) We are also not commanded to be idle, for God has not commanded that anywhere.

(3) The commandment not to work has also not been given to enable us to do something else in its place—something spiritual. The implication would then be that one is not to be active, but rather to be engaged exclusively in the spiritual service of God. The cessation of labor would then be necessary due to labor being a hindrance to spiritual exercises.

(4) The command not to do any manner of work is also not conjoined to another element of sabbath observance, as if being idle and serving God were conjoined as two collateral activities. This would suggest that he who would have done no work would have observed this commandment partially, and this would likewise be true for him who had served God spiritually and nevertheless had done some work.

(5) Rather, doing no manner of work and religious worship must be conjoined as being one injunction. Doing no manner of work must be understood in a spiritual sense, so that it refers to the manner of religious engagement, and thereby is distinguished from religion in the general sense of the word as it is enjoined in the first commandment. It is not *rest* which is commanded, but rather, a *holy rest*. “To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord” (Exod 16:23); “... in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord” (Exod 31:15).

The work which is forbidden here is the labor of one’s occupation, generally referred to as “work”—be it trade-related labor, plowing, sowing, harvesting, business transactions, buying and selling, and all that whereby man earns his living. Not comprehended in this are:

(1) Religious labors, such as when ministers preach in the sweat of their brow, and whatever else transpires in the realm of religion. The priests killed the animals on the sabbath day and nevertheless did not sin.

(2) Works of *absolute necessity*, which are necessarily engendered by unexpected events on the sabbath—be it that a fire breaks out, a person falls in the water, etc.

(3) Works of *mercy*, such as caring for the sick, and some of the labors of pharmacists, doctors, surgeons, and midwives (that is, as far as helping women in need and women giving birth to a child). This also pertains to feeding cattle in the winter, providing protection against the enemy, etc. Then it holds true: “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” (Matt 12:7); “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Secondly, *the persons* by whom the sabbath must be sanctified are: “thy son ... thy daughter, thy manservant ... thy maidservant ... thy cattle ... thy stranger that is within thy gates” (Exod 20:10). By this delineation, all men without distinction are forbidden to work. It is not sufficient that we rest ourselves, but we must also permit our children and servants to rest, and we must even oblige *strangers* who dwell or stay with us to rest. They are also men, and the commandment is applicable to them as well as to native residents and members of the church. Yes, even the cattle must rest, since they cannot perform work without the direction of man. God thus wishes to have complete silence upon the entire face of the earth.

The third matter to be noted in this commandment is the added *incentives*. These are three in number.

(1) There is the example of God. God has created man after His image. This holy disposition of soul must also be manifested by man’s deeds, and when he is thus active, he must be engaged in

harmony with both God's commandment as well as His example. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Eph 5:1). God, after being engaged in the work of creation for six days, rested upon the seventh day, and by so doing has designated this as an example to be followed. Man must be motivated by this to do likewise.

(2) The second incentive is taken from that which is to our benefit. "Therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day." This does not imply that inherent efficacy was bestowed upon this day in order to render it profitable to man. Rather, it is a promise of blessing made to the conscientious observers of that day; that is, the receipt of comfort, joy, and holiness for the soul, and to render the physical labor of the six workdays to be more prosperous and profitable. For everything is dependent upon the blessing of the Lord, and without this all our labor is in vain (Ps 127:1-2).

(3) The third incentive is derived from God's command and the appropriateness of obedience to it. *He hallowed it*. The Lord has set this day apart for sacred usage in order that man may solemnly and uniformly glorify and serve Him with a holy rest. No one may therefore make this day a common day by using it as other days and spending it by working. Rather, according to God's command, we must acknowledge it as having been set apart and spend it in a fashion which is consistent with the purpose for which God has set it apart and designated it.

As is true for the other commandments, we must also consider the sins which are prohibited as well as the virtues which are enjoined.

The Sins Prohibited

The sins which are prohibited can be enumerated as follows:

First, we sin when we do not, with joyous approbation, set the sabbath apart from the other days, and when we fail to acknowledge that this day has been set apart by God by virtue of His example and command, having appointed it to be a day of rest, refreshment, and glorification of God. This sin consists in disobedience and a despising of privileges.

Secondly, we sin when we make a *workday* out of this day—if we occupy ourselves with the work of our profession; that is, to be engaged as brewers, bakers, laundry men, cooks, tailors, and shoemakers. Furthermore, we sin if, in order to finish remaining work, we then bring work home, even if it is toward noon. This also applies to barbers, those who load and unload ships, those who labor upon ferries, luggage porters, and garbage men; it pertains to all the labor whereby one earns a living. To this also belong miscellaneous activities which one postpones to the day of rest or

does on this day to be prepared for the next day; such as mending, washing of children, to either prepare wash, send it to the laundry, or receive it at home, writing out bills, and going shopping—in one word, all that by which one gains money and time. On this day God wants universal cessation of activity upon the entire face of the earth. This is evident from the commandment itself.

Thirdly, we sin when we transform this day into a *market day*. This pertains to buying and selling by merchants, store owners, sellers of fruit, vendors of all sorts of edible material, sellers of fish, etc. (cf. Neh 13:15-16, 19-21).

Fourthly, we sin when we make this day into a *day of worldly pleasure*. The sabbath is a delight—however, a delighting in the Lord. It is a dreadful desecration of this day, however, when we abuse it by delighting ourselves in worldly things and in the lusts of the flesh. This pertains to sailing, horse-riding, fishing, bird-hunting, playing tennis, playing ball, or to the entertaining of one's self with such things that are lawful at the appropriate time and place, in the appropriate company, and with the appropriate objective. This pertains even more to games of chance, playing cards, and playing with dice (cf. Isa 58:13-14). However, strolling in the fields or in gardens (be it alone or with others) does not belong to the forbidden sins, if we do so for the purpose of observing the works of God, to glorify Him thereby, and to be refreshed according to soul and body. Even if the world does this in a sinful manner, this cannot prevent the believer from doing it in a spiritual manner.

Fifthly, we sin when we make this day into a *day of sin*, attiring ourselves with all manner of hideous, worldly garb, and even daring to come thus to church and thereby before God's countenance. This pertains to drinking in bars and inns, where one can hear the violin, the vain chatter and jeering of drunkards, and the playing of drums. This pertains to having cold buffets in one's yard, elaborate meals in the home, and being engaged in all manner of foolish talk and gossip. This pertains to going courting—as young men and women are accustomed to do in many villages. In one word, we sin if we spend this day in all manner of looseness and licentiousness. Such sins are double in measure—yes, they provoke God in an extraordinary manner.

Sixthly, we sin by making this a *day of idleness*,⁹ spending the entire day in a lazy and slothful manner, sleeping the major part of the morning. Having nothing to do, one can then catch up on sleep.

⁹ à Brakel uses the graphic expression “ezelsdag” here, which literally means: “a donkey's day”!

Thus, there are many who sleep away the morning service, eat during the afternoon service, and walk away the evening service. Even if one has attended the worship services once or twice, he may possibly have slept there or have been occupied with other thoughts, and thus derived no more benefit from this than a donkey would. Such persons nevertheless imagine that they have spent the sabbath well, for they have rested and have been to church.

Seventhly, we sin when we reject and speak against the sabbath; draw others away from hallowing this day and give them liberty to do so; ridicule those who conscientiously hallow the sabbath according to God's command, railing at them by calling them ignorant, hair-splitters, and hypocrites (how abominable!); are unwilling to hallow the sabbath ourselves; draw others away from doing so; and mock with those who sanctify this day.

The Virtues Enjoined

The virtues enjoined in this commandment are comprehended in preparation, observance, and reflection.

The necessity of preparation is apparent from the command: "Remember the sabbath day." That this was practiced in the church is evident from Mark 15:42, "It was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath." This is as yet practiced by the Lutherans in many localities—which ought to convict the Reformed churches. To this preparation belongs:

(1) the knowledge of and acquiescence in our obligation to hallow this day, and the actual separating of this day from other days according to the command and example of God—thus being engaged in an activity which is so delightful, beneficial, and God-glorifying;

(2) a spiritual desire for this day in order that one may quietly approach unto God and rejoice in Him, so that this day is a delight rather than a burden;

(3) prayer for strength and ability to hallow this day, so that in some measure we may be inclined toward spiritual things—this in view of the aversion which the flesh has for this day;

(4) the timely cessation of one's daily labors, lest by working until late in the evening one render the body unfit, which in turn prevents the lively frame in which the soul ought to be, and lest there be no time left for preparation;

(5) the provision and preparation of food for the family for that day, so that no shopping need to be done on that day and there be little required as far as cooking is concerned.

Observation not only consists in resting—as if that were the whole or part of its observance. It also does not consist in *servicing God in*

a more spiritual manner than on other days. Neither does it consist in a narrow-minded “touch not and taste not,” nor in asking, “May I do this or may I do that?” The sabbath is not a snare, but rather a day of delight—not, however, for sinful flesh. Those who are spiritually minded will almost always know what either favors or impedes the spirituality of the sabbath and the hallowing of this day.

Sabbath observance consists, first of all, in focusing upon the commandment and example of God which are held before us to be followed. This must be accompanied by obedient subjection and a love to imitate this.

Secondly, it consists in spending this day in holy resting and being completely withdrawn from the world, in being elated and joyful in God, and in holy jubilation.

Thirdly, it consists in occupying one’s self in beholding the works of God in creation, preservation, and government. It furthermore consists in meditating upon the great work of redemption through Christ, in all this acknowledging and rejoicing in God’s goodness, wisdom, power, truth, omnipotence (and of all that is revealed of God of this in our hearts), and thus glorifying and praising God. It is to be occupied with that sweet work of angels!

Fourthly, it consists in attending the public gatherings of God’s people, as well as in rejoicing in the fact that one may be among them and with them, appear together before God’s countenance, sing His praises, worship Him, hear the voice of the Lord come to our ears and hearts, and receive the benediction.

Fifthly, it consists in visiting the sick and the destitute, to bestow something of which they are deprived, to read something out of God’s Word, and furthermore if they are unconverted, to convince them of sin and judgment and make them acquainted with the Lord Jesus. It also consists in comforting the converted and in stirring them up to be patient.

Sixthly, it consists in exercising the communion of saints; that is, in having sweet fellowship with godly acquaintances in private gatherings where they occupy themselves with the reading of God’s Word, the singing of psalms and spiritual songs, and in mutual conversations, exhorting and comforting each other.

Seventhly, it consists in contributing, with a joyful and compassionate heart, something of one’s profit—earned in the previous workdays (or else something of one’s belongings)—to the poor, the common fund of the deacons, individuals with whom one is acquainted, and others whom the Lord causes us to encounter.

Reflection is also needful to preserve the sabbath disposition and blessing. *First*, this consists in reflecting upon how the day was

spent publicly and privately, and upon the sins which one has committed; that is, laxity, listlessness, lack of spirituality, and the failure to abhor these. Confess this with sorrow before the Lord, and seek forgiveness through Christ.

Secondly, it consists in reflecting upon the good we have performed on this day, upon the upright objective to hallow the sabbath, and the efforts to do everything in such a manner as is pleasing to God. It furthermore consists in reflecting upon the blessings, refreshments, comforts, illumination, and quickening we enjoyed from the Spirit of the Lord. One must acknowledge this and rejoice in this, even if it were ever so little. Even if the insatiable desire of our soul has not been satisfied, we should yet thank the Lord for the good we received.

Thirdly, it consists in the acknowledgment of God's goodness to His church in giving her the sabbath, enabling her to gather publicly and conduct all her public worship services, and for the privilege to enjoy a holy rest.

Fourthly, it consists in yearning and longing for the rest which remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9), in rejoicing in this hope, in forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Blessed is he who thus begins, observes, and ends the sabbath.

Additional Incentives for a Proper Observance of the Sabbath

Even though the above mentioned matters will motivate a godly person to earnestly observe the sabbath, it will nevertheless be beneficial that we add some incentives in order to stir you up. They are derived from that which is detrimental to transgressors and from that which is beneficial to conscientious observers.

First of all, reflect attentively upon the harm that befalls desecraters of the sabbath—that which pertains to the sin as well as the punishment. The desecration of the sabbath is a dreadful sin, for:

(1) it is a violation of God's commandment, and it is all the more sinful because one at the same time rejects the example of God which ought to be followed;

(2) it destroys external and common religion in its entirety, for all the commandments of the first table converge in this commandment;

(3) it is a despising of God's friendship and goodness from which the gift of the sabbath has proceeded, and which God demonstrates to His people upon the sabbath, letting them taste of this.

Secondly, God pronounces dreadful judgments upon the desecraters of His day.

(1) One robs himself of the spiritual and temporal blessings which God has promised to pour out upon those who hallow the sabbath.

(2) The general curses which pertain to transgressors of the law are applicable to such persons. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10).

(3) An entire register of plagues is pronounced upon desecraters of the sabbath (cf. Lev 26:2, 14-16, etc.).

(4) Set your heart upon the following passages as well: “What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city” (Neh 13:17-18); “But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the sabbath day ... then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jer 17:27); “Yet also I lifted up My hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them ... because they ... polluted My sabbaths” (Ezek 20:15-16). Consider also Amos 8:11 11-12. God enumerates several sins in this chapter—among others, an aversion for the sabbath. Thereupon several judgments are threatened, among which is the removal of His Word. “I will send a famine in the land ... and they shall wander ... to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). He who therefore fears such judgments as are mentioned in these texts, ought thereby to be discouraged from desecrating the sabbath—this being the cause of these judgments.

In the second place, meditate on the other hand upon the benefits which have been promised to those who hallow the sabbath. The commandment comprehends all this with the words: “Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day.”

(1) It is a delight for a believer to hallow the sabbath, even if there were no other promises. “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night” (Ps 92:1-2). This is the work of the sabbath and all that is good and sweet is inherent in this work.

(2) The work of the sabbath is to glorify God, and this is the highest form of felicity. That is the entire content of the above mentioned psalm for the sabbath. See this also in Isa 58:13, where we read, “If thou ... call the sabbath a delight,” in order that the Lord, who is worthy to be honored, may be sanctified.

(3) It is then that God promises to come to His people, and He brings them to Himself. Felicity, all salvation, and refreshment for

believers is to be found in this mutual approach unto, and fellowship with, each other. The Lord Jesus thus revealed and glorified Himself to His disciples, doing so even on two successive sabbaths (John 20:1,19,26). It is in this manner that the Lord Jesus glorified Himself to the apostle John and brought him in the Spirit on the Lord's day, making him fit to receive the revelation (Rev 1:10).

(4) God promises many blessings to those who hallow the sabbath day in soul and body. Regarding this, consider the following two passages: "Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it. ... For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths ... even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off ... every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar" (Isa 56:2, 4-7). Consider also this passage: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa 58:13-14).

He who therefore desires all these benefits ought to hallow the sabbath—the promise being that they will be given on this day.

The Fourth Commandment: Ceremonial or Moral in Nature?

It now remains for us to deal with the great *point of contention*—a consideration which we wanted to append since we must express ourselves somewhat more comprehensively here in order to promote the honor of God, His holy service, and the observance of His holy day.

The point of contention is this: Does the seventh-day sabbath, as proposed in the fourth commandment, belong to the ceremonial law given to Israel alone, so that it has thus been fulfilled and abolished by Christ? Or does it belong to the unchangeable rule for a holy life—as is true for the other commandments of the law—thus obligating all men of all ages to obedient observance, both prior and after the incarnation of Christ?

Many opponents present themselves, who, however much they

may differ from each other in other matters, join focus in opposing the sabbath.

First, the Jews—to whom must be added some heretics in the early church—admit that the sabbath is of eternal duration. They insist, however, that the seventh day after creation (or the day which has always been observed by the Jews) is to be observed.

Secondly, *the Socinians, Anabaptists, and Antinomians* (opponents of the law) reject the entire law—and thus also this commandment.

Thirdly, there are others who designate nine commandments as an eternal rule of life, but who fully eliminate the fourth commandment, considering it to be entirely ceremonial. They state outright that we now do not have ten commandments, but only nine. However, this sentiment has no adherents except ignorant people who neither know what they are saying nor what they are affirming.

Fourthly, there are others who are less offensive with their words, but in very deed reject the entire commandment. They maintain that there is something moral as well as ceremonial in this commandment (which foreshadows Christ). They consider the moral aspect to be the requirement of public worship without any reference to day or time, and that the seventh day is ceremonial, typifying the resting of Christ in the grave. Thus, it has been abolished with the resurrection of Christ.

Fifthly, there are others who interpret it as follows: Prior to the fall God obligated Adam to work all the days of his life. However, his work was to be neither burdensome, grievous, nor tiring. This remains the obligation of all men outside of the realm of the church, and they must do so with grief and pain as a punishment for sin. They maintain that God established the covenant of grace on the seventh day, accompanied by the promise of the coming of the Messiah. He thus would have given His partakers of the covenant a day of respite and relief: the seventh day. Prior to Christ's coming this would have typified the resurrection of Christ, and subsequent to His coming it would have been a memorial thereof. At the same time, it would have signified in both dispensations the benefits merited by Christ's resurrection—both in this, as well as in eternal life.

The church of all ages has been opposed to these propositions. We therefore maintain that this commandment is of the same moral nature as the other nine and does not typify Christ in the least. This commandment not only enjoins public worship, but also the hallowing of the seventh day following six workdays, and that this day be spent in holy resting.

In enlarging further upon this we must make a distinction

between the commandment and the incentives for observance. It is true that occasionally an incentive is taken from something which was peculiar to Israel alone, such as in Deut 5:15, “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” These words were neither declared from Sinai nor inscribed in the tables of stone, but were used by Moses, as a faithful servant of God, upon repeating the law. He used this incentive to stir them up to let their servants rest on the sabbath.

It must also be noted that the word “ceremonial” is not found in the Bible and that one therefore ought not to dispute about this word. The common usage of the word signifies an ecclesiastical duty, or an external circumstance, deed, action, or transaction. In this respect there are also ceremonies in the church of the New Testament: preaching with either a covered or uncovered head, sprinkling once or thrice in holy baptism, either immersion or sprinkling at the administration of baptism, either sitting or standing when partaking of the Lord’s Supper, etc. These are ceremonies which neither add to nor subtract from the essence of the matter. It is common among theologians, however, also to refer to the types of Christ as ceremonies due to their external mode of administration. We maintain, however, that there is no typification of Christ in the fourth commandment. It is in this sense that we maintain that there is nothing ceremonial in it. If, however, one considers an external circumstance which is changeable to be ceremonial—the essence of the matter being preserved—then we can indeed say that there is something ceremonial in it, understanding thereby only the change of day. In the Old Testament this was the last day of the week, and, as is surmised, the seventh day in reference to creation. I repeat, as is surmised; for one cannot be certain, as precise chronological calculations cannot be made retroactively to Adam. Furthermore, men’s lives in the east or the west can differ twelve hours and thus half of a twenty-four-hour day. They especially cannot maintain that the sabbath which Israel observed was exactly the seventh day after creation, maintaining that there was no sabbath prior to Moses’ time, and that no one was acquainted with such a day. This we deny, even though we would surmise that the hallowing of this day was sometimes very much neglected. Therefore, the essence of the sabbath did not consist in hallowing the exact seventh day after creation, thereby implying that the commandment is violated if one were to miss it

by half a day. This has absolutely never been the intent of the fourth commandment; rather the intent is the hallowing of the seventh day which would follow six workdays. This does not imply that they had the choice to select one of the seven days arbitrarily, selecting a different one of the seven each time as it suited them; rather, Israel knew which of the days was the seventh day they had to observe and hallow. Thus it was prior to Christ's coming; but after Christ's coming the day was changed from the last day of the week to the first day of the week, according to Jewish calculation. This change of day did not come about by the will of man, however, but in consequence of the instruction of Christ and of the apostles (on behalf of Christ). The essence of the sabbath remained in full force, and it returns each time after six workdays.

We have thus identified the nature of the argument. It is now necessary to verify our sentiment and then to respond to the objections of opponents.

The Sabbath, Having been Instituted Prior to the Fall, is Not Ceremonial

Proof #1. We derive this from the institution of the commandment which predates the fall. From this we make the following conclusion: If the commandment pertaining to the sabbath was given to Adam prior to the fall, it then belongs to the unchangeable rule of holiness—just as the other commandments of the moral law do. It thus obligates all men of all ages, and neither belongs to the ceremonial law, nor has it been fulfilled and abolished in Christ. Instead, the sabbath has been given to Adam prior to the fall. Consequently, etc.

The thrust and veracity of the first proposition is evident from the fact that Adam represented the entire human race prior to the fall. This was due to the covenant of works then in force, and because Christ was neither necessary, known, nor promised at that time. Thus neither the gospel nor the ministry of shadows could have any function. These matters are beyond all argumentation.

The second proposition, namely, that the sabbath has been given to Adam prior to the fall, is evident from Gen 2:1-3, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." In order to perceive the thrust of this argument, note the following:

First, consider the connection and the historical relationship between the first seven days apart from any intermediary issues. (It must be understood that there are no chapters in the Hebrew text, and therefore read the first and second chapters as one chapter.) It is related there what God performed on each day, and at the same time what function and approbation God attributed to each day. In thus arriving at the seventh day we observe the same sequence. We are told that there was then no work left to be done, but that it had all been completed in the previous six days. We are furthermore told that God rested on this day from His labors and that God—as He did on the other days—expressed His approval of the seventh day and assigned it its function. He *blessed* and *hallowed* it, not blessing Himself, but the day—and He hallowed it. He did not do this to the natural day itself, but rather the day as having been designated for sacred usage—as is pointed out in the fourth commandment. When His rest is given as the reason for blessing and sanctification, God has not only given a commandment to rest on the seventh day, and appointed this example to be followed, but He has established an express ordinance and has *blessed and hallowed* this day. What else can hallowing a day in this case mean but designation for a sacred purpose?

Secondly, note that this *ordinance of the seventh day was made prior to the fall*. This is evident for the following reasons:

(1) The sixth and seventh days are joined together (as the other previous six days were) without any intervening matters, and also without any reference to the fall. It is therefore audacious to insist on adding something to this.

(2) The fall is recorded as having occurred after the seventh day, for it is recorded in Gen 3, subsequent to the first seven days and all that transpired in them, being described in a continual and uninterrupted fashion.

(3) The Holy Spirit bears witness that all was still very good upon the completion of the seventh day. “And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen 1:31). The fall had thus not occurred.

(4) The Lord rested on the seventh day; that is, He observed all His works with delight, rejoiced in them, and was refreshed. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed” (Exod 31:17). When God saw the sin of man, it is written, “And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart” (Gen 6:6). If man had fallen upon the sixth day, then God, rather than

having been refreshed, would have had sorrow and grief of heart. This was not so, however, but He refreshed Himself. Instead of pronouncing a blessing, God would have cursed man and the earth. We thus perceive from all this that man did not fall upon the sixth day and that the sabbath was given him prior to the fall—and thus the sabbath existed prior to the fall.

(5) Although this argument, when considered independently, carries no weight to either confirm or convince anyone, it nevertheless yields some further clarification when joined to the other arguments. It is not credible that man, having just opened his eyes upon this world, would have fallen immediately and that he would not have had time to delight himself in God and to rejoice in his holy and glorious state. It is credible, however, that God gave him some time to experience that which was good. Man, to some degree, was therefore already acquainted with God, for by the cool of the day he already recognized God's approach unto him (Gen 3:8).

Evasive Argument #1: Is this text not the announcement of an event prior to its occurrence,¹⁰ so that Moses, when speaking of the basis for the sabbath, uses this occasion to add to this commandment the institution of the sabbath as it occurred during his time? We do find more such prior announcements in God's Word.

Answer (1) By asking questions one can cause the unstable sentiments of himself and others to totter. Eve herself was deceived by questions. Instead, one ought to state that such is the case and that there is proof. We deny it, for where is the proof?

(2) It is true, as is often the case with historical documents of human origin, that such announcements prior to the fact relating to future events are also found in the Holy Scriptures. However, then the subject matter at hand demands this and its purpose is obvious. Here neither the one nor the other is true. Refrain from such reasoning as: *It could be thus, for it is occasionally true elsewhere*. Such are evil teachers who cause the soul to be prejudiced and unfit to perceive the truth.

(3) This cannot be an announcement prior to the fact. This is evident from the text itself, for it is stated what God did upon the *first seventh* day, and not what He did about 2400 years later. Furthermore, when God speaks of the sabbath at the time of Moses, He speaks of it in such a fashion as being a matter which had been instituted on the *first seventh* day (cf. Exod 20:11). It is indeed contrary to all probability that God, commanding something

¹⁰ à Brakel uses the peculiar word “voorverhaal” here. Since this word is probably a neologism, it can only be translated in a descriptive manner.

after 2400 years, would derive a reason from something which had transpired so long ago, and of which there would have been no knowledge during all that time. Also, if the sabbath were only pointing to Christ, God's resting upon the *seventh* day in the past could not have been foundational for the sabbath.

(4) If this were an announcement prior to the fact, no original institution of the sabbath could be found in God's Word, for the sabbath was already observed prior to the giving of the law upon Sinai. It was already observed when the manna was given in the desert. Mention is then made of the sabbath as being a known institution, and thus, not instituted at that time.

(5) Such an announcement prior to the fact was devised for the purpose of designating the sabbath as ceremonial. However, this renders the announcement itself invalid. For this announcement would have been made at the occasion when a reason or argument was given for the sabbath, which looked retroactively at God's rest, and not forward to the Messiah.

(6) If such a statement were to have any semblance of validity, it would *first* have to be determined that the entire book of Moses—and particularly the first chapters—were written by Moses after the exodus from Egypt and subsequent to all that transpired at Horeb. However, there is no evidence of this whatsoever, and thus the notion of an announcement prior to the fact is without foundation.

Additional Evasive Argument: God intended at that time to give this day to His people, and had decreed to do so 2400 years later; but He did not enjoin Adam and his descendants to keep this day.

Answer: This is contrary to the text, which does not speak of an intention but of an actual institution. It is an ordinance which is comparable to the resting of God. God's resting was, however, not an intention to rest sometime in the future, but an actual resting. Likewise, the blessing and hallowing of this day were actual occurrences which did not pertain to God but to man. It was thus a commandment given to man, and this at the very outset of time.

Evasive Argument #2: The sabbath was not applicable to Adam prior to the fall for he neither had to work nor became tired. Furthermore, he glorified God every moment, so that the sabbath could not have been given to him then.

Answer (1) Adam had to work indeed. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen 2:15).

(2) The purpose of the sabbath is to rest, that is, to cease from labor—even if there is no fatigue.

(3) Although Adam was able to glorify God every moment, it was

nevertheless God's will that he would do so on the *seventh* day by ceasing from his labor and hallowing that day.

(4) The law was not given to Adam as an individual, but as being the father of the entire human race, which—upon multiplication—would be under obligation to celebrate this day by coming together before the countenance of God to unitedly praise and glorify Him.

Evasive Argument #3: Prior to Exod 16 one does not read that either Adam or the fathers who followed him were either acquainted with or observed the sabbath. It is therefore not probable that the sabbath had already been given then.

Answer (1) Little is recorded of the *first* 2000 years. It has pleased God to record particularly what has transpired with Abraham and his seed. One cannot conclude, simply because it has not been recorded, what they have or have not known and done.

(2) It does not matter what Adam and the men following him have done, but rather, what they were obligated to do according to the commandment. Circumcision was also neglected in the wilderness, and yet it remained a command. This is also true of the sabbath.

(3) Men spoke of the *seventh* day prior to Moses. “Fulfil her week. ... And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week” (Gen 29:27-28). It must be noted that in the original text the word (ωβ# (*shebua* ‘)) is recorded. This in turn is related to the word *shebigni* (i.e., the *seventh*), which is recorded in this commandment.

(4) When God gave the law, He spoke of this as a matter which already existed and was known. It reads: “Remember (not the *seventh* day but) the sabbath day.” It furthermore reads: “Therefore He blessed (not blesses) and hallowed (not hallows) it.” And such was indeed the case. “And it came to pass, that on the *sixth* day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning” (Exod 16:22-23). The elders did not understand the reason why the bread had thus been multiplied. Moses, in instructing them, brings to mind the instituted and blessed sabbath, which (as they knew) would be the following day—a day upon which God willed that they should rest, and that He therefore had provided for them ahead of time.

(5) Paul speaks of a rest and, pointing to Gen 2, of a rest of the *seventh* day—an institution which had been in place since the foundation of the world. “If they shall enter into My rest: although

the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the *seventh* day on this wise, and God did rest the *seventh* day from all His works” (Heb 4:3-4). From all this we can observe that since the time of Adam and prior to the giving of the law, man has had the institution and the knowledge of the sabbath.

Evasive Argument #4: If there is already mention of the hallowing of the *seventh* day in Gen 2, does this pertain to the hallowing of that one day only, it being done once in reference to God rather than man?

Answer: No; this was the hallowing of the *seventh* day which chronologically reoccurs. It is very evident from Exod 20 that this is for man’s benefit, for there the hallowing of the *seventh* day in chronological order is commanded due to God having blessed and hallowed this day, solely because He—in view of Gen 2—rested on the *first seventh* day. This at once makes it evident that God has given this day to man.

Evasive Argument #5: It appears that God did as yet do some work on the *seventh* day, for Gen 2:1 is the conclusion of the six-day creation, and in verse 2 mention is made of some work again: “And on the *seventh* day God ended his work which he had made.” From this it can be concluded that God executed the work of redemption on the *seventh* day by restoring man.

Answer (1) This is an erroneous conclusion. It is not stated here that God did some work on the *seventh* day, but that on the *seventh* day He had already ended the work which He had made; it was finished at that time. To have ended work does not imply the doing of work, but rather the completion of work and the not doing of any work subsequent to that.

(2) This is expressly refuted in Exod 20:11, for there it is stated that God rested on the *seventh* day, in contrast to His labor of six days. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh* day.”

(3) If God had done most of His work on the *seventh* day—for the work of redemption excels the work of creation—then God’s example of resting on the *seventh* day after six days of labor could not be held before man as the reason for resting on the *seventh* day, as is the case here.

(4) If the thought would occur that God had accomplished the work of redemption on the *seventh* day, it would *first* have to be a known fact that man had already sinned. Not only is this not so, but the very opposite is proven.

All this proves it to be immovably true that the sabbath was

given to Adam prior to the fall—and thus to the entire human race. Consequently, it is not a ceremonial command, but of the same nature as all other moral commands which are a perpetual rule of holiness for all men.

The Sabbath is Not Ceremonial: Its Observance is Regulated by the Moral Law

Proof #2: This is derived from the commandment in Exod 20. I draw the following conclusion from this: Whatever commandment is a commandment of the moral law, is not ceremonial, but belongs to the eternal rule of holiness, obligating all men. The *fourth* commandment is a commandment of the moral law, however, and it thus follows, etc. The *first* proposition is irrefutably true. The nature of the whole is also the nature of each part. If the entire law is moral in nature, also each commandment is moral in nature. The *second* proposition is confirmed as follows: The moral law is the law which God Himself declared from Horeb out of the midst of the fire in the ears of all Israel. God Himself engraved this law, which is the law of love (Matt 22), into two tables of stone. This is the royal law (James 2:8-10) which contains in it the requirements of the covenant of works upon which, apart from the gospel, eternal life would follow (Rom 10). This law is the *law of the ten commandments* (Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13). Every reader will have to agree with this. The *fourth* commandment is a statement from this law, however. This is evident from the record of the law in Exod 20 and Deut 5, and it is dealt with in the same way as the other commandments. *From this it follows, etc.*

Evasive Argument: The law of the ten commandments is indeed the moral law, but one commandment must be removed, namely, the *fourth*—that is, to the extent that it is ceremonial and of a different nature.

Answer (1) This is not recorded anywhere.

(2) Then there would only be nine commandments. One must give heed not to subtract from or add to the law (Deut 4:2), nor to nullify the least commandment (Matt 5:19).

(3) There is nothing in this commandment which resembles anything of a ceremonial nature. It cannot be demonstrated anywhere in the entire Scriptures that the *seventh-day* sabbath points to Christ nor in which respect it points to Christ. One could say that it points to Christ's resting in the grave, but 1) Christ was in the grave three days. 2) Furthermore, Christ's burial was a step of His humiliation and He was holden of death. 3) How could such a joyful, happy, refreshing, and God-glorifying rest on the seventh

day be an example of Christ's state of death when there was to be nothing but mourning? 4) Scripture says nothing of this sort. 5) It is contrary to reason, for the commandment is given in reference to something which has preceded and not to something which was to be in the future. There is not even a semblance of this.

(4) The entire subject of the *fourth* commandment predicates its moral nature. The matter which is commanded is a holy and God-glorifying rest. The reason for this commandment is God's institution of this rest from the beginning. The example given us to follow is God's very own activity. To our knowledge, He has never made Himself an example in any ceremonial commandment. If we consider all these things together—the substance of, the reason for, the example for, and the law of which this commandment is a part—then it will powerfully convince the person (who listens more to the commandment of God than to his own confusing ideas) that the sabbath of the *fourth* commandment is not ceremonial, but moral in nature, and is thus obligatory upon all men at all times.

The Eternal Duration of the Moral Law and thus of the Fourth Commandment

Proof #3: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:16-19). The objective of the Lord Jesus in this passage is to demonstrate that by His coming, conscientious godliness was not abolished. The reference here to the moral law can be determined for the following reasons:

- (1) It is that law which is the rule for good works and thus for a holy life (vs. 16).
- (2) It is that law which Christ did not come to disannul, since He did come to disannul the ceremonial law.
- (3) It is that law which Christ has fulfilled (vs. 17), so that by His obedience we are made righteous (Rom 5:19).
- (4) It is that law which will endure as long as the earth will remain (vs. 18).

(5) It is that law which one was not permitted to break upon the coming of Christ, but which one was obliged to do and teach (vs. 19).

(6) It is that law in which murder, the false and unnecessary swearing of oaths, revenge, and adultery are forbidden, and in which generosity and sincere love (even toward enemies) are commanded, this being evident from what follows in this chapter. However, this is the moral law—the law of the ten commandments. Thus, the reference here is to the moral law. Now, neither jot nor tittle of this law will pass away as long as the heaven and the earth endure. Therefore, since the *fourth* commandment is a full-fledged commandment of that law, also this commandment will remain and not pass away. Consequently, this commandment is not ceremonial, but an eternal rule of life, as is true for the other commandments.

Evasive Argument #1: The reference here indeed is to the moral law, and the fact that it will not pass away. It cannot be concluded from this, however, that the sabbath will not pass away, for this does not belong to the moral law. Simply because it is listed among the ten commandments does not prove that it is moral in nature.

Answer: This has already been proven in our *second* proof. Examine the entire New Testament and you will observe that wherever the law is contrasted to the ceremonial law and the gospel, the focus is upon the law of the ten commandments. If one replies, “No, but the focus is upon the moral law,” then I ask, “Where do we find the moral law? Is it not contained in the ten commandments?” If one says, “Yes, but with the exception of one,” then I reply, “But where is that written?” It is nowhere to be found, and it is thus but an idle thought. The law of the ten commandments is called the moral law, and thus all ten commandments are moral in nature.

Evasive Argument #2: We do not deny that the *fourth* commandment belongs to the moral law and is thus of eternal duration. However, the moral aspect in it pertains to the public worship of God and not to its ceremonial aspect which is the hallowing of the *seventh* day.

Answer: This is a self-made fabrication. Let it be demonstrated once that public worship constitutes the moral content of this commandment. Not one jot or tittle can be produced in support of this. This argument is thus rejected as readily as it is advanced. The language of the commandment indicates that the essence of this commandment consists in the hallowing of the *seventh* day. We have sufficiently shown above that nothing of a ceremonial nature is comprehended in this. Therefore, if this commandment is of eternal duration—which is according to the intent and

understanding of this party—then the entire commandment is of eternal duration. It cannot be viewed from a twofold perspective. The essence of this commandment is the hallowing of the *seventh* day after six workdays.

The Observance of the Sabbath to Continue After the Abrogation of the Ceremonial Laws

Proof #4: “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Matt 24:20). It is evident from verse 3 that the return of Christ and the end of the world is discussed in this chapter. It is beyond controversy that the destruction of Jerusalem—forty years after Christ’s ascension—is also discussed here.

Immediately upon Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, the ceremonies had completely lost their efficacy, and from that very moment it was sin to use them in the Jewish manner, that is, as being shadows of the future Messiah. Nevertheless, the external performance in a general and religious sense was tolerated for some time in order not to hinder those that were weak in the faith, and thus to allow time for instruction to prepare them for their full abolition.

However, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christian church had long separated itself from the Jewish church, and the ceremonies had become as dead to them. They were thus neither permitted to strive nor pray for this.

Nevertheless, we see it expressly stated here that there would still be both sabbath and winter, for no injunction can be given about something which does not exist. We do not maintain that there is an injunction here to hallow the sabbath, but that this injunction concerning the sabbath indicates that there would still be a sabbath. Thus, the sabbath is not ceremonial but of eternal duration.

It also needs to be noted that this chapter does not only speak of the destruction of Jerusalem, but also of the dreadful persecution which would come upon the church of the New Testament, which frequently has come to pass since then. At that time the ceremonies had indeed disappeared, and yet the *sabbath*, like the *winter*, would remain.

Evasive Argument #1: Was not this injunction to pray that their flight would not occur on the sabbath, made to Jews in order to inflict temporary misery upon them, since they were not permitted to flee on the sabbath?

Answer: They were permitted to flee, for this was not forbidden in the law. This is evident from various examples in God’s Word.

Evasive Argument #2: Was not this injunction intended for weak Christians for whom it would be objectionable to flee on that day?

Answer: They were indeed permitted to flee, for the ceremonies had been abolished and one was no longer permitted to pray in reference to this.

Evasive Argument #3: Was not this injunction given to prevent the Jews—who would see the Christians fleeing on the sabbath—from killing them?

Answer: There is neither proof nor argument for this. The reference is here not to a general flight, but to flight which would occur as frequently as they would be pursued. The Jews no more concerned themselves with the Christians than they did with the Gentiles. Furthermore, Jews, Gentiles, and Christians were permitted to flee on the sabbath.

Evasive Argument #4: Why then did they have to pray that fleeing upon the sabbath be prevented?

Answer: Since God had appointed this day for refreshment and the enjoyment of an extraordinarily joyous rest, they would then have to miss this, and lose the opportunity to praise God with the congregation and to both edify and be edified. Thus, fleeing on the sabbath would be double misery for the soul—just as fleeing in the winter would be a double misery for the body.

The Observance of the Sabbath: Practiced by Christ, the Apostles, and the Early Church

Proof #5: In addition to the proofs mentioned above that the sabbath is not ceremonial, but moral and of eternal duration, we wish to consider the practice of Christ, the apostles, and the early church. The Lord Jesus honored the gathering of His disciples upon the *first* day after His resurrection with His presence, this being the *first* day of the week. Eight days later the Lord repeated this (John 20:26). Concerning the journeys of Paul we read in Acts 20:6-7, “And we ... came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow.” Take note here that a different day is never mentioned in the New Testament, but that the *first* day of the week is mentioned repeatedly. It is stated as a matter of course that the congregation gathered on that day and that Paul preached on that day in their assembly, and that he would travel the following day. It can thus be clearly observed that they observed the sabbath on the *first* day of the week.

Consider furthermore what is written in 1 Cor 16:1-2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day

of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” Again the *first* day of the week is mentioned as the familiar day for worship and assembly—not for some private individuals, but for the congregations. The apostle John, having been banished to the island of Patmos after the destruction of Jerusalem, indicates that the Lord’s day was celebrated in a sacred manner. This day he celebrated, calling it by the name familiar to all—the Lord’s day. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). Concerning the sabbath, it is written in the *fourth* commandment: “But the *seventh* day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exod 20:10). This is the day which the Lord has instituted, hallowed, and blessed.

Add to this the practice of the churches of Christ from the time of the apostles until today. Take as an example the testimony of ministers in the church who lived shortly after the time of the apostles.

Irenaeus: “God Himself has proclaimed the words of the ten commandments, and they therefore remain with us, having neither been diminished nor nullified by the coming of Christ” (*Adv. Hoeres. lib. 4. cap. 31*).

Basilus calls the Lord’s day the sabbath (*Epis. ad Caesar. Pater*).

Epiphanius: “The *first* sabbath is that day which God has decreed from the beginning and incorporated into the creation of the world, which from that day on (*take note!*) until now continues in the sequence of seven days” (*Hoeres. 51*).

Athanasius: “Formerly they of old greatly honored the sabbath, and this glorious day the Lord Jesus has changed into the Lord’s day” (*de Senin*).

Eusebius: “Christ has obligated all men, wherever they are in the world on water and on land, that they congregate on one day of the week.”

Augustine: “The apostles have instituted the Lord’s day in the stead of the sabbath of the Jews” (*Epist. 3 ad Magn*). “One ought to know that not only has this been commanded by our holy forefathers, but rather by God Himself: we must rest upon the Lord’s day” (*Serm. de Temp. 251*).

Justin Martyr: “Upon the day which is called Sunday, an assembly of all takes place” (*Orat. ad. Aut. P.*).

Chrysostum: “This doctrine God has already revealed to us from the beginning, teaching that in the rotation of one week, an entire day must be set apart and be used for spiritual work” (*Gen. Hem. 10*).

Constantinus Magus: In “*Teste Eusebio in vita constantini,*” he gives this injunction: “Let the entire soul be occupied on that day

with the service of God, and that men rest from the work of the market, from legal transactions, and from plying a trade” (*lib. 4. 18*).

The first Christians were also very conscientious in hallowing the sabbath. As the sabbath was previously a sign that God sanctified the Jewish church and took her to Himself as a people, the sabbath was likewise such a sign among the *first* Christians. The heathen would lie in wait on that day to overtake the Christians, and if they had caught someone, the person was asked whether he had also observed the Lord’s day. They would then answer resolutely *that they were Christians who had observed the Lord’s day with the proper religious zeal because one was not permitted to neglect the observance of this day*.

Behold, there you have some evidence from the early churches. We can observe from this that they have celebrated the *seventh* day by divine ordinance. Now consider all this together. The *seventh* day has been instituted prior to the fall and has been commanded in the *fourth* commandment of the moral law—of which neither jot nor tittle will pass away. Christ declares that the sabbath will endure after His time, and Christ, the apostles, and the early churches have observed the sabbath. How can anyone therefore reject this day with good conscience? Ought not everyone to be convinced of the eternal duration of the sabbath, be ashamed over his unsteadfastness and grieve over its desecration, and furthermore, be stirred up to a conscientious observance?

Various Objections Answered

Objection #1: The Sabbath Does not Issue Forth from the Character of God

All commandments which are enduring moral rules, issue forth from the nature of God, are inherently virtuous, and have something of the image of God. These commandments are known from nature, obligate all men, and do not flow out of a voluntary institution which God can either command or not command. The sabbath, however, does not issue forth from the character of God, has no inherent virtuousness, nor anything of the image of God. This commandment is of a temporal nature, is not known by way of nature, and is not an obligation for all men. Since the heathen have no knowledge of this commandment, they also do not sin in violating the sabbath, which was given to Israel only. It rather issues forth from a voluntary divine institution, so that God potentially could have not commanded the observance of the sabbath.

Consequently, the commandment of the sabbath is not an enduring rule of life, nor does it pertain to us in the New Testament.

Answer: Both the *first* and *second* propositions are not logical, and rest upon unfounded thoughts proceeding from a darkened and corrupt intellect.

First, we deny the *first* proposition, for it is not founded upon God's Word and is nothing but imagination. Whether a commandment issues forth from the character of God, it being impossible for Him not to give the command, or a commandment issues forth out of pure sovereign good pleasure, so that He could either give or not give it—in either case it is equally binding upon man.

Secondly, it is injurious to the sovereignty of God to suggest that He would neither be permitted nor be able to issue commands at will—commands not necessarily flowing forth from His character—as an eternal moral rule for the entire human race. His will must be sufficient for the creature; He is the sovereign Lawgiver. You—whoever you may be—do not begrudge Him His right.

Thirdly, the darkened nature of man does not understand why God's laws are appropriate under given circumstances for rational creatures. He therefore cannot judge the appropriateness of the laws which he but observes in an external sense, without penetrating to the very essence of them. He is also not acquainted with the character of God, and thus cannot judge what would flow forth from the character of God relative to a creature under given circumstances. It is intolerable to think that such an ignorant creature would have the audacity to summon God before him and demand a reason as to why He has given such and such a law, and that such a fool would dare to establish a rule by which it can be determined what is of eternal duration and what is not.

Fourthly, man's corrupt nature is also not acquainted with all the commandments of the eternal moral law. Paul says concerning the *tenth* commandment: "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom 7:7). One must make a distinction between the holy and the corrupt nature. We who are darkness do not know what a holy nature would teach us. Man's corrupt nature cannot judge in this, and is thus not the touchstone whereby commandments are to be examined. It furthermore suffices that God has placed the human race under obligation by way of a commandment. Irrespective of whether man has lost that knowledge through carelessness or still has that knowledge, it obligates him just the same.

Fifthly, man, in observing the commandments, must focus upon the will of God. If he then but perceives that the sovereign Lawgiver

has commanded this and that it is His will that he do this, this ought to be sufficient for man, "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph 6:6).

The second proposition is abominable: The sabbath does not issue forth from the character of God, does not inherently have any virtue or anything of the image of God, cannot be known by way of nature, has been given to Israel only, and is only a positive command which God can either give or take away. Since the *first* proposition does not agree with the truth, it is immaterial whether the sabbath is a necessary or voluntary command. One need but perceive whether or not we have been commanded to do so.

In particular, it should *first* be stated that to say that the sabbath does not flow forth from the character of God is more easily said than proven. Our corrupt nature cannot be our judge in this respect. If you maintain that it pertains but to a limited time frame, I answer that this is invalid. It pertains to a holy rest at a given time, as God has exemplified this by designating His doings to be an example to be followed by us. And why would it not be possible that the circumstance of time be moral in nature, as well as the circumstances of persons or matters? And if the sabbath did not flow forth from the character of God (which we do not admit), then what? The sabbath can still therefore be both enduring and moral in nature. The will of God obligates man.

Secondly, we deny that the sabbath does not inherently have some virtue and something of the image of God in it. It is virtuous to hallow the sabbath for it is the doing of the will of God. Obedience to this commandment belongs to the image of God, for it is a loving acquiescence with the will of God—yes, it is an act of imitation of and conformity to God, for God has rested upon the *seventh* day and has therefore given us that day in order that we would follow His example (Exod 20:11). We are under obligation to be "followers of God, as dear children" (Eph 5:1).

Thirdly, it is an invalid argument that the sabbath cannot be known from nature.

(1) Furthermore this is no reason to remove a commandment from the moral law.

(2) We cannot maintain that man's holy nature would not have instructed him about the sabbath. We believe that man's holy nature, being acquainted with the example of God, would have been instructed to observe the sabbath as well as the other commandments. Man's corrupt nature knows very little of the spirituality of the moral law, except for some external and broad issues, thus excusing it.

(3) The heathen have already spent much time in celebrating special days—yes, they are even acquainted with the *seventh* day.

Fourthly, we deny that the sabbath has been given to Israel only. It was given to the church, which at that time existed within the seed of Israel. However, it had previously been given to Adam and thus to all men.

Evasive Argument: Something is stated in this commandment, however, which can only have reference to Israel. “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt ... therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day” (Deut 5:15).

Answer: One must make a distinction between the commandment and its circumstantial application. The *first* is always the same, but the *second* can be changed time and again. For if one were to conclude from the fact that the circumstantial application pertains to Israel alone, that then the entire commandment pertained to them only, by way of the same conclusion, one would then have to conclude that the entire law is not applicable to us due to the preamble which is applicable to Israel alone. The argument stated there—which is here advanced in Deut 5:15—is the same: the deliverance from Egypt and from the house of bondage. One could thus conclude in like fashion that the *fifth* commandment also does not pertain to us, there being a promise which only pertained to Canaan (and thus Israel). Nevertheless, both the entire law and the *fifth* commandment are moral (Eph 6:2).

Objection #2: The Sabbath Is Part of the Ceremonial Law

“Moreover also I gave them My sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them” (Ezek 20:12).

(1) It appears that God, having declared the giving of institutions and judgments—which if a man do, he will live thereby—says subsequently: “For that purpose I gave them My sabbaths,” thereby indicating that the sabbath is of a different nature than the other institutions.

(2) The sabbath is called a sign here, and it is thus a reflection and shadow of Christ. Consequently, the sabbath belongs to the ceremonial law and is presently not a rule of life for us.

Answer: This is contrary to their own proposition, for according to their own exposition they understand the ordinances to be ceremonial laws, and if then the word $\mu\gamma\omega$ (*wagam* = and moreover) were to indicate that the sabbaths were of a different nature, then the sabbaths would have a moral connotation. However, we shall answer the matter as follows:

First, the word *wagam* (= and moreover) has as its primary meaning “and also,” so that the word “moreover” must be understood in such a sense as meaning “*and also*.” This does not constitute a contradiction, as if the one would be of a different nature than the other. Rather, it frequently indicates that two or three matters are being joined together, without there being an implication of the joining of natures. Such is the case in the following passages: “There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Ps 14:3); “And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also wept” (Gen 50:17-18); “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord ... I will go also” (Zech 8:21). Everyone can readily perceive that the little word “also” does not imply a contradiction of nature, but rather an enlargement of what has preceded. Thus, also here the words “moreover,” “or,” and “also” imply as much as, “I have given you My ordinances and judgments, and more specifically my sabbaths.”

The seventh-day sabbath belongs as much to the law—which Stephen calls *the living oracles* in Acts 7:38—as the other commandments. It is expressly stated concerning the sabbath that, “the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths ... even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (Isa 56:4-5). Furthermore, we read in Isa 58:13-14, “If thou ... call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable ... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.” It is thus evident that there can be no contradiction here between ordinances and judgments (life being attainable through them) and the *seventh-day* sabbath—implying that life could not be obtained through it. Thus, a contradiction can neither be deduced from the word “sabbath,” nor from the subject matter under consideration.

Thirdly, it is also evident that the reference is not to the weekly sabbath. It is generally referred to as *sabbath*, whereas the ceremonial ordinances are referred to as *sabbaths*. And even if they have the name in common, they are not equal in nature. Arguments would thus have to be presented that the weekly sabbath must also be comprehended in this.

As far as the *second* objection is concerned, namely, that the sabbath is called a sign, this will readily disappear if one notes, *first* of all, that the entire moral law is also referred to as a sign. “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand” (Deut 6:8). Divine plagues are also referred to as a sign: “And they shall be

upon thee for a sign and for a wonder” (Deut 28:46). Isaiah—as is true for other prophets as well—is likewise referred to as a sign. “Like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia” (Isa 20:3). The Lord Jesus Himself is also referred to as a sign: “This child is set ... for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2:34). The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are also referred to as signs. “And these signs shall follow them that believe” (Mark 16:17). A sign does not always refer to something future, but also to something in the present. “Show me a token (or sign) for good” (Ps 86:17). From all these texts it is sufficiently evident that all that is referred to as a sign is not necessarily a ceremony or shadow pointing to Christ, nor does it necessarily signify something in the future. It is expressly indicated here that this sign symbolizes a current matter: “a sign ... that I am the Lord that sanctify them.”

Secondly, one matter can have many objectives. By stating one objective, one is thereby not negating another objective. Something which existed previously, but did not function as a sign, can become a sign of something while preserving its original function. Thus, the rainbow, which already existed previously, became a sign of the covenant established with Noah (Gen 9:12). Such is also true for the sabbath, which already had been given to Adam. This day, while preserving its moral nature, could indeed become a sign, when God—upon the entire world becoming ungodly—took a people unto Himself from all nations. It was a sign that they were God’s people and that it would be recognized by the observance of the sabbath, for sabbath-observance is very noticeable. It is the most unique and public of all religious observances.

Objection #3: The Sabbath was Abolished by Christ

“For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day” (Matt 12:8). It appears that Christ defends His disciples as far as picking corn was concerned, by giving them liberty to do this on the sabbath. Since He was Lord of the sabbath, He thus showed that He was abolishing the sabbath. Or else man has been designated as lord of the sabbath and may do with this day as pleases him.

Answer: First, there is not one word which implies abolition. Simply because someone is lord of something does not mean that he therefore does away with it; rather, he preserves, uses, and governs it. Secondly, this is not a case of sabbath-desecration, for it was indeed permitted on the sabbath to walk through the field, to pick ears, to rub them in the hands, and to eat the kernels of grain. It was but a superstition of the Jews to consider this to be unlawful.

This is evident from verses 3 and 5, where we read, “Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?” Thirdly, if the sabbath were a type of Christ in the grave, then it could not have been abolished here, for the antitype had not yet been fulfilled. Fourthly, Christ Himself observed the sabbath: “And he came to Nazareth ... and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day” (Luke 4:16). Fifthly, Christ taught His disciples to pray that after His death no discomfort would befall them on the sabbath (Matt 24:20). Sixthly, Christ thus wished to say hereby that He, as the Lord of the sabbath, knew the right meaning of the sabbath and was able to explain it.

We shall respond to the *second* objection as follows:

(1) It was Christ’s common manner of speech to call Himself the Son of Man. Having referred to Himself by the one nature, He ascribes to Himself that which belongs to the essence of His other nature. It is He to whom the Father has given “authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:27). Thus, “the Son of Man” must be understood as a reference to Christ Himself, rather than to every man.

(2) By way of the Son of man the reference was to the entire human race, and thus the sabbath was given to the entire human race, and it is consequently a moral commandment which pertains to all men.

(3) To go a step further, if “the Son of man” signifies the Jews—although such is contrary to Scripture and reason—even if this were so, then what? Being the lords of the sabbath, they therefore could act as they wished. Then they would not have sinned if they transgressed the sabbath—also not prior to that time. If this were understood as referring to the disciples who as lords would have abolished the sabbath, the type would have been removed prior to the coming of the anti-type or the fulfillment.

(4) There is here therefore only a defense of the fact that the disciples had not sinned, and that the plucking and eating of ears upon the sabbath was lawful. Even though it was not permitted without due cause, it would nevertheless be no sin here, since there was due cause, and it would be as much as to say that when those two come into conflict—man and the sabbath—injury must be done to one of the two. Either man would have to do something to the deliverance of another man, which, apart from this case, would not be lawful on the sabbath, or that person would have to perish. In such a case the deliverance of the person must have

precedence and the sabbath must yield. Man is superior to the sabbath and mercy must have precedence over the sacrifice (vs. 7)—and thus nothing is stated contrary to the sabbath.

Objection #4: The Sabbath Is Detrimental to the Gospel

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it” (Rom 14:5-6); “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal 4:10-11); “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col 2:16-17). The difficulty which would present itself in these texts is this: It seems as if the distinction of days is removed so that one may not judge another about this. Furthermore, it appears that the keeping of days is detrimental to the gospel, and thus there neither is a sabbath in the New Testament nor may it be observed.

Answer: First, these texts cannot be used as an argument against the sabbath if one maintains that there is still a moral element in the *fourth* commandment, even though there was merely an obligation to set apart some time for public worship (irrespective of what time this may be and to what extent one may do so). This implies a distinction of time, even if it were but every twentieth day, if it were but a half day or some hours. Thus, according to that presupposition, these texts do not speak of a distinction between times or days which is enjoined in the *fourth* commandment—and that is the point in question. And thus in harmony with the sentiments of the opponents themselves, these texts cannot be advanced as an argument against the sabbath.

Secondly, it is a well-known truth that the apostles commanded the churches everywhere to observe the Lord’s day (refer to the above). It is common knowledge that there was neither any contention concerning that day, nor was there any intent to force or eradicate the observance of this day contrary to the wishes of the apostles. It is thus evident when the apostle, in the texts mentioned, opposes those who wished to introduce the observance of days, that he does not have the Lord’s day in view, and that no one in the *first* congregations had any such thoughts as far as this day was concerned. Rather, everyone understood very well that the apostle did not speak of this day, but of other Jewish ceremonial days. If, however, the apostle does not speak in these texts of the

Lord's day, one can neither make use of them to prevent the observance of the Lord's day, for one would thus miss the point of the question completely, which is: Ought one to observe the *seventh* day, which is the sabbath, and is called the Lord's day?

Evasive Argument: These texts are presented, not to prevent the observance of the Lord's day, but to demonstrate that one is not to observe this day by virtue of some divine commandment, and that we observe it only as an institution of men.

Answer: If the apostle does not speak of the Lord's day at all, then he also does not say whether it is to be observed either by virtue of a divine commandment or a human institution. Thus, neither proposition can be confirmed or refuted by these texts. The apostle is referring to the Jewish ceremonial days, so that one would *first* have to prove that the *seventh* day—the sabbath or the Day of the Lord—is a ceremony and shadow. Only then can one produce these texts in order to refute the observance of the sabbath. To maintain, however, that the apostle forbids the observance of ceremonial days, and that the sabbath is consequently ceremonial, is an invalid conclusion.

Thirdly, if all distinction between days had been forbidden here, the apostles could not have instituted the Lord's day. The church would then also not be able to either institute or observe the Lord's day, prayer days, or days of thanksgiving, as the distinction of days of which Paul speaks in this text is harmful to the gospel. Such observance would thus be contrary to the command of the apostles, and would be such will-worship as is condemned in Matt 15:9. Indeed, since the distinction of foods is here placed on the same level with the distinction of days, the former being a sign of the antichrist and a doctrine of devils—"commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Tim 4:3)—then the institution of the distinction of days (if the apostle were condemning this in a general sense) would lean greatly in that direction. It is thus very evident that the apostle does not speak in a general sense against the observance of times and days, but he speaks against the observance of Jewish and ceremonial days. One can thus not conclude that the distinction of days, and thus also the sabbath has ceased. And as long as one has not proven that the observance of the sabbath or the Lord's day (by virtue of God's command) is Jewish and ceremonial, one may not advance these texts as an argument against it. If, however, such were the case, only then would they be applicable, and not any earlier.

Fourthly, if we may not judge each other in the observance of this day—indeed, if those were the strongest in the faith who do not observe such a day and if such observance were injurious to the

gospel—then no one is under obligation. Yes, the best thing to do would be to work on the Lord's day and let those go to church who wish to do so. However, no one will admit to that. It is thus evident that these texts are not general, but refer to the Jewish ceremonial days. However, then they do not pertain to the question whether or not the Lord's day should be observed by virtue of God's command or by virtue of human institution; for this is an entirely different question. We readily subscribe to and contend for the interpretation that the apostle speaks of Jewish ceremonial days, and that they may not be instituted again. What proof does this yield, however, in opposition to the sabbath of the *fourth* commandment, which had already been instituted prior to the fall (Gen 2)? The proof derived from these texts is thus: The Jewish days must be abolished and consequently the sabbath must be abolished. The Jewish days are ceremonial in nature and thus the sabbath is ceremonial. Who cannot see that such a conclusion is invalid? One would *first* have to determine that the sabbath is Jewish and ceremonial and then conclude that it must be abolished. However, the *first* cannot be proven from these texts, as we have demonstrated. Let us now consider each text in particular.

As far as Rom 14:5-6 is concerned, the question is whether the observance of all days should be tolerated. The believers among the Gentiles (who constituted the church) understood correctly that one was not bound to the Jewish days, and that the distinction of foods had also ceased. The weak believers among the Jews, who had joined themselves to the congregation, understood indeed that the ceremonies were to be eliminated, for they confessed that Christ had already come; however, they deemed that the Jewish days still had to be religiously observed, and that one as yet was not permitted to eat all foods. The believers among the Gentiles could not tolerate this. Paul exhorts that for the time being one must bear with those who are weak, and that the ceremonial days were not observed in a ceremonial sense, but engaged in as religious exercises. They would thus observe them unto the Lord, which could be tolerated for some time. The Jews, in turn, had to tolerate that the Gentiles did not observe these days. Thus, this text does not apply in the least to the Lord's day, that is, the sabbath.

Let us consider Gal 4:10-11. Rather than tolerating the weak believers among the Jews (Rom 14), the apostle does not want it to be tolerated that the Jews would forcefully defend the entire ceremonial service (and thus also the Jewish days), reintroduce it, and compel others to do likewise, as the Jews attempted to

do (cf. Gal 3:1, etc; Gal 4:9). That which can be tolerated in someone who himself is weak but quiet, cannot be tolerated when someone becomes bold thereby and forces his errors upon others. Not one word is mentioned here as to whether the sabbath is either ceremonial or moral, or whether it ought to be abolished or remain in force. In these general answers it has now been demonstrated that these texts are not to be interpreted in a general sense, and that from a general proposition concerning all Jewish days nothing can be concluded in opposition to the sabbath.

Evasive Argument: This must be understood as a reference to all the holy days of the Jews—even of the weekly sabbath. Mention is made here of *years* (to which belonged the *seventh* year and the year of jubilee), and of *times*, which are the three solemn feast days *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and *the Feast of Tabernacles*. It also mentions *months* (which are the new moons), and *days*, which can be nothing else but the *seventh* day, that is, the sabbath.

Answer: First, it must be proven that the apostle understood by these words the feast days mentioned. *Secondly*, even if it were admitted that it refers to years, months, and times, it nevertheless does not follow that one must understand “days” to refer to the sabbath of the *fourth* commandment—unless they, in addition to the times mentioned (years, months, and *seventh* day) had no other days. However, they had other high-days in addition to those, as is to be observed in Lev 23 and will soon be demonstrated from Col 2. The other feast days were of the same nature as those times, years, and months. Thus, by reason of the mention of “days” here, it does not follow that the sabbath must be counted among them. Since the *seventh-day* sabbath is, however, not of the same nature as the other days, but is moral, and is advantageous rather than detrimental to the gospel, it is evident that the apostle does not speak of the sabbath here. Add to this the answers given to the general questions.

Let us consider Col 2:16-17. In order to understand this text, it must *first* be noted that the Jews had many sabbaths. There were *the fifteenth day* of the *first* month (Lev 23:27), *the last day* of the Passover, and in verse 21 yet *another feast day* is mentioned. Furthermore, there are *the first day* of the *seventh* month (Lev 23:27-25), *the tenth day* of the *seventh* month (Lev 23:27-28), and the *eighth day* of the Feast of Tabernacles (vs. 36). All of these were ceremonial in nature. In addition to these there was, however, one which already had been there from the beginning, and which has been commanded in the *fourth* commandment of the moral law. This sabbath was of an entirely different nature; it was of a moral nature.

Secondly, matters of a different nature may have the same name. Judas the traitor and Jude, 113 In Dutch these two names are identical in spelling. 3 the author of a powerful epistle, have identical names. Nevertheless it may not be said of both what is said of Judas. One may thus also not say of all sabbaths what is said of the sabbath, for they are distinct. There are ceremonial sabbaths—which bear the name sabbath together with the moral sabbath, due to having rest as a common focus—as well as the moral sabbath.

Thirdly, an unrestricted manner of speech may not be made applicable to all matters which bear a given name; rather, one must limit himself to the subject matter under discussion. This will be understood by every intelligent person. In order to demonstrate this to the inexperienced, however, let us take note of this text. The words “food” and “drink” are used here in the same unrestricted sense as the word “sabbaths.” It can readily be understood, however, that under the words “food” and “drink” not all food and drink must be comprehended, even though it bears the name of food and drink. Rather, it only refers to that food and drink in question, which are not vegetables, bread, etc., but the foods forbidden in the ceremonial law, which the apostle gives them the liberty to use. Once more, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). One may not conclude from this that he ought to keep the ceremonial laws in the New Testament merely because they bear the name of commandments. Rather, one must understand this to refer to the commandments which are now in force. And thus there are numerous texts in which unrestricted usage must be interpreted according to the context, and it must not be extended to all that bears that name. If you apply this rule to the word “sabbaths,” the difficulty will have been removed. In the Old Testament there were many sabbaths. Matters of a different nature do bear the same name. From an unrestricted manner of speech one may not make applications to all that bears that name. This being irrefutable, it is likewise irrefutable that one may not come to the conclusion that the *seventh-day* sabbath has been abolished simply because the apostle uses the word “sabbaths” in an unrestricted sense. Rather, one must apply this to those sabbaths which are of one and the same nature as food and drink, that is, which were ceremonial and typical, as is to be observed in verse 17. One may thus not conclude that the *seventh-day* sabbath is a shadow merely because there are food, drink, feast days, and sabbaths which are shadows.

Fourthly, it can readily be observed that it is not the apostle's intention to prove what is typical and what is not, but rather what needs to be abolished due to being typical. Among them he mentions the sabbaths, but neither does he say "all sabbaths" or "such and such a sabbath," for it is evident to which sabbaths he refers here. It is likewise understood which sabbath he did not refer to, since the *seventh-day* sabbath was observed by the congregation, and there was no question concerning this. One ought therefore *first* to prove that the weekly sabbath belonged to the shadows, and then this text will be applicable as far as abolishing the sabbath is concerned.

Fifthly, consider furthermore that it reads "sabbaths," and not "sabbath," since the *seventh-day* sabbath is generally referred to in God's Word by the singular form "sabbath"; if "sabbaths" occurs, then it occurs due to the continual repetition of every *seventh* day. It also needs to be considered that Paul is not speaking here to Jews who were external to the church, so that Christians would be contrasted with Jews and he was thus rebuking their religion, but to those who were within the church and by whom the weekly sabbath, also called the Lord's day, was observed.

Objection #5: The Sabbath is Typical of the New Testament Dispensation

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the *seventh* day on this wise, And God did rest the *seventh* day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was *first* preached entered not in because of unbelief: again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb 4:1-11).

The apparent strength of the argument lies herein:

(1) The rest which remains is understood to be the deliverance from the ceremonial law, and thus represents the New Testament dispensation.

(2) This rest—said to be the New Testament dispensation—was depicted by God’s rest on the *seventh* day and by the rest in Canaan.

(3) Since the New Testament dispensation is now upon us, the *seventh* day—being a shadow which no longer exists—has been entirely eliminated.

Answer: First, these texts cannot be advanced by those who hold to some moral dimension in the *fourth* commandment, and who consider the continuation of a day of worship a necessity. For this text absolutely denies the *seventh* day and all rest—except the other rest which yet remains.

Secondly, we absolutely deny that by “*the rest which remaineth*” is understood the abrogation of the ceremonies, that is, to the New Testament dispensation.

Neither in the matter itself nor in the text is there the least proof; instead, heaven is understood by this.

(1) Each and everyone whom the apostle addresses here (also unbelievers) was already discharged from the ceremonial law. Christ had already abolished all shadows and thus all would then enjoy this rest. Nevertheless, the apostle declares that no one but *true believers and all the people of God* shall enter into this rest which remains.

(2) The apostle exhorts the godly—who already had been delivered from the ceremonies—that they should give diligence to enter into this rest which yet remains and is yet in the future for God’s people.

Thirdly, the apostle here speaks of such a rest of which they also who lived in the Old Testament could become partakers if they believed, and from which they were deprived by nothing other than unbelief (vs. 2). Thus, this rest is not a discharge from ceremonies, but something else which one could obtain while partaking of the ceremonies, and which one, due to unbelief, could come short of subsequent to having partaken of the ceremonies, that is, come short of heaven.

Fourthly, we deny at the same time that *the New Testament* dispensation was typified by the rest in Canaan and by the rest of the *seventh* day. For 1) God’s Word states this neither here nor elsewhere. 2) To designate God’s rest on the *seventh* day as being typical of the New Testament dispensation, and of the abolition of the ceremonies of the Old Testament—which must necessarily be maintained by those who wish to advance this text contrary to the

sabbath—is without proof, too farfetched, and too brazen an assertion. Since the *seventh* day existed prior to the fall, it could be no ceremony of something which points to Christ and the New Testament dispensation. It is thus evident that the *seventh* day was not a depiction of the days of the New Testament.

Fifthly, the apostle demonstrates here that neither Canaan nor the sabbath was the true rest, but that believers must have a different rest in view—a rest which they as yet did not possess: the eternal rest in heaven, which believing souls would enjoy as soon as they depart from this life. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). This blessed rest is declared by the gospel to both the church of the Old Testament and also now in the days of the New Testament (Heb 4:2, etc.).

Objection #6: The Sabbath Is to Be Observed on the Seventh Day Following Six Workdays

If the *fourth* commandment were to belong to the moral law—and thus be binding upon us—then the *seventh day after creation* ought to be celebrated. However, not this day but rather the *first* day of the week is celebrated.

Answer: To remove the burden of this difficulty, the following matters ought to be noted.

First, in one and the same commandment various things which belong to each other can be commanded, yet in such a manner that the focus is primarily upon one matter. The others being subservient to this are commanded as well. For example, a government commands a specific individual to pay certain taxes on a given day. Three matters are commanded there: the time, the tax, and who will receive them. Everyone can perceive, however, that the tax is the primary issue, even though the other two injunctions must also be obeyed. Such is also the case here. Time and matter are commanded in the *fourth* commandment, that is, holy rest and the *seventh* day to that end. The holy rest has the primary position in the commandment. “Remember (not the *seventh* day, but) the sabbath day to keep it holy.” The time is indicated subsequent to this: “The *seventh* day is the sabbath of the Lord.” These two may not be separated; nevertheless the holy rest is of primary importance.

Secondly, there is no mystery concealed in the moment as to when the *seventh* day after creation occurs, for when God commanded the human race in Paradise to hallow the *seventh* day, it would have been impossible for all men occupying the globe to begin the sabbath at the very same hour. It must have differed as

much as twelve hours. Thus, when the one part of the world began and observed its sabbath, the other part was still permitted to work twelve hours, and whereas the other portion was finished and had again begun to work, the other was still observing the sabbath. For when it is day for one portion of the world, it is night for the opposite portion. We also know that during the time of Joshua there was a week which was approximately twenty-four or twelve hours longer, and thus an entire day longer than other weeks (Josh 10:13). Consequently, all sabbaths subsequent to this came twenty-four or twelve hours later than the previous sabbaths. It also has never created a problem for the dispersed Jewish church that the one began and finished the sabbath a few hours earlier than the other, this being contingent upon whether they were dispersed toward the east or toward the west. We thus observe that there is no mysterious element in the moment itself—be there a difference of twelve hours—and that such can occur while the matter itself remains in force in its entirety.

Thirdly, one must make a distinction between the commandments and the circumstances surrounding the commandments. The circumstances indeed change, but the matter nevertheless remains.

(1) For example, the *second* commandment dictates the manner of worship. However, in the Old Testament God wanted to be served by external elements, as being shadows. God abolished this entire method in the New Testament and replaced it by an invisible manner of worship—without this ceremonial framework—although the commandment remained in force. This change is significantly greater than the continuation of some hours. Even though it is not expressed in the commandment, it is a known fact that the ceremonial laws, in regard to their foundation, must be related to the *second* commandment.

(2) Once more, the *fifth* commandment promises a long life in Canaan; this only was applicable among the Jews. God abolishes this in the New Testament and replaces Canaan by everyone's residence (Eph 6:3), and thus the commandment remains in full force. One must therefore in the *fourth* commandment also make a distinction between the matter which is commanded, and the attending circumstances. Likewise also here the matter itself can be preserved, even though there is some continuation of some hours, or of one day.

Fourthly, one must strictly observe this commandment and neither add or take away anything, due to prejudice, nor give anything a different meaning. If we thus approach the *fourth* commandment, we shall find there the injunction, application, and

argument for observance. The injunction is: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the *seventh* day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.” Not a word is mentioned here of the *seventh* day in the order of creation, but only of the *seventh* day which follows after six workdays. However, how will one know which *seventh* day? Is it a matter of indifference? Is this left to the freedom of each man? No. God had already made known since Adam that He wanted the *seventh* day observed (consistent with the order of creation)—which is to be observed from the reason added to this commandment. Thus, this attending circumstance of the *seventh* day as being in precise harmony with the sequence of creation does not belong to the essence of the commandment. If God thus causes the commandment to remain in force—that is, the hallowing of the *seventh* day—and He changes something in the attending circumstance which preserves the holiness and the hallowing of the *seventh* day; and if by the advancement of some hours on a given day it no longer is the *seventh* day in chronological order from creation, no change occurs in the essence of the commandment, but only to a small degree in the circumstances. However, God has indeed advanced the sabbath by one day, so that the sabbath is no longer the *seventh* day from creation in a chronological sense, but it nevertheless remains the *seventh* day which follows six workdays.

This change has not come about by human initiative, but by the initiative of Christ and His apostles. This is *first* of all evident from Christ’s appearance on that day to His gathered disciples and the repetition thereof on the subsequent *first* days of the week. We do not read of an express institution here, but it shows, nevertheless, that since the resurrection of Christ, the *first* day of the week has been observed according to the reckoning of the Jews.

Secondly, consider furthermore the ordinances of the apostles—who were moved by the Holy Spirit—and of Christ who instructed them in the forty days prior to His ascension in those things which they were not able to bear prior to that. Consider also the continual practice of the church during the apostolic age, as is to be observed in Acts 20:7, “And upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow.” Why is mention made here of the day, that is, of the *first* day of the week? Why did the church gather on this given day and celebrate the Lord’s Supper? Why is it recorded that Paul preached on that day? Why is it added that he was ready to depart on the morrow? This confirms that the sabbath was observed on the *first* day of the week.

Consider furthermore 1 Cor 16:1-2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the *first* day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” Why was it the *first* day of the week? Why were alms gathered then? Does not this again clearly indicate that the sabbath was the *first* day of the week, and that the work pertaining to the sabbath had to be performed? By what other argument and on what other basis did they observe this day, except the institution of Christ commanded to His disciples, be it orally or by His Holy Spirit? For the apostles would not have tolerated any human institutions.

Add to this Rev 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” Observe again how this day is acknowledged. But why is it called “the Lord’s Day”? This is so because the Lord has instituted it. For the same reason it is called *the sabbath of the Lord*, and the Holy Supper is called *the table of the Lord*. It is also suggested that this day is called the Lord’s day because Christ arose from the dead on that day. To this I reply that the matter is indeed true, for the *first* day of the week is indeed the day of Christ’s resurrection. It will never be proven, however, that the apostle focuses only on this in the text. This manner of speech, in harmony with God’s Word, points to its institution.

Thirdly, consider also the continual and common use of this day from the resurrection of Christ until this day—as recounted in the foregoing. From all this it is evident that the change of this day is not a human but a divine institution. It therefore remains unchangeable, and not a single specific church has had the heart to change that day.

Evasive Argument: Should not the change in the New Testament have been conveyed by an express command?

Answer: We have no right to give God directions. If we did not wish to adhere to this commandment, and did not understand its meaning due to our blindness, would God then be obligated to give us that command by renewal, doing so with words which we ourselves would formulate? That one commandment ought to be sufficient for you, for it is not a new commandment, but only a change in circumstances. Thus, if you presently do not observe the sabbath, you are transgressing the commandment. If there is a sabbath, would you then desire any other day except the day which Christ and His disciples have observed and imposed upon the church—this being confirmed by the practice of the church for a duration of seventeen hundred years?

Question However, what is the reason for the change of this day?

Answer: It is foolishness to demand a reason from the sovereign Lawgiver. If His commandment is not sufficient for you, no reason will satisfy you. In the entire New Testament I observe a very great change in the entire manner of worship. I observe that the Redeemer of the world has risen on the *first* day of the week. I observe that by the observance of the *first* day of the week the church is separated from the *Jews, Muslims, and heathen*. I observe that thereby the entire Jewish religion stands condemned, and that the heathen ought to be convicted of their ungodliness. This suffices for me and ought to be satisfactory to everyone.

Objection #7: The Sabbath is a Ceremony Typifying Spiritual Worship

Would it not be possible to say that we ought to observe the sabbath in the New Testament by reason of the *fourth* commandment, doing so because it is a ceremony—the ceremonies being examples of the spiritual worship of the New Testament? Does not the *fourth* commandment obligate us in that respect to a spiritual rest and a public glorification of God?

Answer: From every angle this objection is fraught with errors and absurdities.

(1) If one maintains and teaches that we must observe the sabbath by reason of the *fourth* commandment, and one keeps silent about his perception as to the manner in which this is to be understood, he is deceitful by way of *aequivocatio*, or allusion, for he appears to be orthodox, whereas his sentiments are entirely to the contrary.

(2) One establishes a false foundation, namely, that the *fourth* commandment is ceremonial. It is, however, entirely moral in nature and literally has nothing ceremonial or typical in it, which we have demonstrated comprehensively. The foundation being contrary to truth, all that is built upon this argument is contrary to truth.

(3) It is also untrue that the ceremonies of the Old Testament are exemplary of the spiritual worship of the New Testament. We are entirely and completely free from the ceremonial law, and are under no obligation to it in any part or in any respect. The ceremonies were typical examples of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and have been fulfilled and abrogated in Him. One can indeed learn many things from the ceremonies about God, Christ, and the duties of true partakers of the covenant, and cause them to bear upon us by way of application, “for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15:4); however, they do not place us under obligation. Not the ceremonial law, but the moral law is our rule—our perfect rule. Only the

moral law obligates us to all that is spiritual and to all that must be performed by us; we must live according to that law and not according to the ceremonial law.

(4) To maintain that, by reason of the *fourth* commandment, we must observe the sabbath in such a sense, is to fully subject us who are in the New Testament to the ceremonies again by observing them from the very beginning. For every ceremony would then obligate us to such and such a spiritual duty—whatever one can deduce by way of application. The duty can be good, but the efficacy which obligates us proceeds from the moral law; or else, it would again become touch not and taste not.

CHAPTER FIFTY

The Fifth Commandment

The entire law is love, and this love has two objects—God and our neighbor. Therefore there are two tables of the law. We have discussed the *first* table in the previous four chapters, and we shall now proceed to discuss the *second* table. The *first* commandment of this table pertains to the relationship between superiors and subordinates. We must note here the commandment and the incentive. *The commandment* pertains *first* of all to the subject and subsequently to the work or the duty related to that subject.

The Full Scope of the Words “Father” and “Mother”

The subject is expressed by the words *father and mother*. Various persons are denominated as such and likewise various individuals are comprehended under the words “father and mother”—that is, within the family, church, and civil state.

Within the family circle there are fathers and mothers of different rank.

(1) There are *natural parents* relative to children whom they have begotten. This pertains not only to the father, but also to the mother, and thus to both of them without distinction—whether rich or poor, of a high or low station in life, good or evil, or young or old. “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old” (Prov 23:22). Yes, in order that the mother (who generally and more readily receives less esteem) be not despised, she is at times mentioned before the father. “Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father” (Lev 19:3). They are both comprehended under the word “parents.” “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Eph 6:1).

(2) There are *grandfathers and grandmothers* and earlier ancestors (Num 2:34).

(3) There are *stepfathers and stepmothers* who support and maintain children. In this capacity Joseph is called the father of the Lord Jesus (Luke 2:48, 51).

(4) There are *fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law*. Jethro was such as far as Moses was concerned (Exod 18:17, 24, 27), and Naomi in regard to Ruth (Ruth 3:1).

(5) This is true for *the husband in reference to his wife*, for he is her lord (cf. Gen 18:12; Ps 45:11).

(6) This is true for *uncles and aunts*, particularly when they have taken the place of deceased parents. To this also belong *guardians*, and those who have adopted someone to be their child—as *Mordecai* did with his cousin *Esther* (Esther 2:7).

(7) This pertains to masters in regard to their servants.

In the church the following are comprehended under fathers:

(1) *the ministers*; in this respect Elisha called Elijah his father (2 Kings 2:12), the king of Israel called Elijah his father (2 Kings 6:21), and Paul calls himself a father of the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:15);

(2) *the elders* are the coregents, protectors, and caretakers of the church and therefore worthy of double honor (1 Tim 5:17);

(3) *the deacons* are as fathers to the poor, collect that which is needed for their support, and distribute according to everyone's need.

In civil relationships the following are comprehended as fathers:

(1) *The governments—at the highest as well as the lowest levels, each according to his rank. The word "father" is therefore mentioned in association with their name—such as, Abimelech, my father the king.* David thus called Saul his father (1 Sam 24:11), and Deborah called herself a mother in Israel (Judg 5:7).

(2) *The elderly and prominent* in reference to those that are young and of a low station. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (Lev 19:32); "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father ... the elder women as mothers" (1 Tim 5:1-2).

(3) It pertains to school teachers, master craftsmen, and women, and furthermore, all who function in some relationship with others as superiors and subordinates. Whoever you may be, you are subject to some relationship; or else you are in some respect in either a superior or subordinate position to others. This either has been the case, or is presently true. Call to mind how you have behaved yourself in this respect and what is as yet required from you.

The required action toward the subjects is expressed by the word *to honor*, which implies the duties of superiors to subordinates and

of subordinates to superiors. We shall deal with each individually and then make a contrast with the forbidden vices of each party.

The Virtues to which Superiors are Enjoined

The virtues of superiors toward subordinates are:

First, *to maintain* the station in which God has placed each person, to preserve respect in all dignity, and to adorn this station. “When I went out to the gate ... the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up” (Job 29:7-8).

Secondly, *tender love* must be manifested in all their governing, so that it will become manifest that all is executed in a good-natured and loving manner toward the subordinates.

Thirdly, there must be *a good example* toward others who are in a superior position in order to teach subordinates how they must conduct themselves toward their superiors, so that one may be able to say: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Fourthly, *there must be a concern for the well-being* of one’s subordinates in regard to soul and body, knowing that the superiors are there for the subordinates. The king is there for his subjects, the minister for the congregation, the school teacher for the children, and the master craftsman for the laborers. The subordinates also exist, however, for the benefit of the superiors, thereby upholding them in their station, which in turn is to the benefit of the subordinates. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith” (1 Tim 5:8); “... the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (2 Cor 12:14).

Fifthly, the subordinates must be instructed, exhorted, rebuked, and if necessary, be punished in order to mend their ways and preserve them. “Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4); “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov 13:24).

Sixthly, the weaknesses of subordinates must be overlooked and patiently endured; the heart may not be withdrawn from them for this reason. “I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal 3:17).

The Virtues Enjoined of Subordinates

The virtues of subordinates to superiors are the following:

First, they must be *honored*. This includes:

(1) *Having respect* for superiors as having been placed over them by God. “Esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess 5:13).

(2) *Subjection* to them as being subject to God. “Let every soul be

subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God (Rom 13:1).

(3) The obligation of paying *homage* to them in words and gestures, doing so either by bowing, the uncovering of one's head, or in a different manner—all according to the custom of the land.

Secondly, they must be *loved*—not only as fellow men, but also relative to that relationship. Even if the person is not lovable and behaves himself unworthy of either love or esteem, he must nevertheless be loved in that relationship as having been placed over us. It is the ordinance of God to love them—it pleases God, and it is also very beneficial.

Thirdly, there must be *faithfulness* in maintaining the relationship to the superior in all that this relationship mandates.

(1) As much as possible, we as subordinates must preserve their belongings and give diligence that they be not wasted due to our carelessness.

(2) We must render every *service* which this relationship toward the superior requires. “Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity” (Titus 2:10).

(3) We must support our superiors according to our ability or as far as the relationship obligates us to do so. “But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn *first* to show piety at home, and to requite their parents” (1 Tim 5:4). David did this (1 Sam 22:3), as well as the Lord Jesus (John 19:26).

(4) We must promote the honor of our superiors, and not tolerate their being despised.

Fourthly, we must *obey* them; that is, comply with their orders and diligently execute them. “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Prov 1:8); “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh” (Col 3:22). This is not only true when their government is gentle and good-natured (as it ought to be), but also when they are froward and cruel. If superiors commit evil, they are accountable. The subordinate must, however, be obedient—not only because this is right and desirable, but also because the superior demands this, his injunction being regulative for the subordinate. “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward” (1 Pet 2:18). There is only the following exception: If they command what is contrary to God's law, one *may not* obey them. Then the direction of Peter is in force: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Acts 4:19).

Fifthly, we must have *patience* with their weaknesses. They are

people, and for the most part are without grace. They give offense, live ungodly lives, and do not behave themselves well toward subordinates. We must pity them for this and pray for them. The latter is particularly true of those who fear the Lord. “Despise not thy mother when she is old” (Prov 23:22). To mock with them is the work of Ham (Gen 9:22, 25).

The Sins Prohibited

The sins against this commandment can easily be deduced from the commanded virtues by defining the contrary. We shall briefly add them here.

The sins of superiors to subordinates are the following:

First, *they sin when they render despicable the station to which they have been appointed* by means of evil and tyrannical conduct, by a careless neglect of duty, by an ungodly life, or by unrighteously taking advantage of subordinates.

Secondly, they sin when they *hate* their subordinates, have a hostile disposition toward them, treat them cruelly and as slaves, conduct themselves as if the subordinates merely exist for them, to do their bidding, and conduct themselves proudly and arrogantly toward them.

Thirdly, they sin when they *give an evil example*, are disobedient toward those who have been placed over them, speak evil of them, and despise them. This will cause their subordinates to follow in their footsteps and also deal likewise with them. They sin when they do not perform their duty toward others and yet strictly demand that others perform their duty toward them.

Fourthly, they sin when they *do not seek the advantage* of their subordinates, but rather their own, utilizing them in such a manner as if they but serve their superiors to help them to gain honor, money, and profit—getting as much out of them as they can in demanding: *give, give*.

Fifthly, they sin when they *do not care about the welfare of their subordinates*, allowing them to go on without any instruction, exhortation, and rebuke; when they allow them to grow up without restraint, and do not care for the physical and spiritual welfare of the children and servants.

Sixthly, they sin when they *mete out severe and cruel punishments to their subordinates for their weaknesses*—even the most insignificant weaknesses. They do so not for their benefit, but because they are of the opinion that their own dignity and respect have been violated—as if they were God and everyone must bow before

them. If they are but injured in the least, their wrath arises in order to vindicate themselves.

The sins of subordinates toward their superiors are the following: Obedience, lack of causes problems

First, they sin when they *have no esteem* in their heart for their superiors, despising them, not willingly submitting to them, and are impolite, sullen, and conduct themselves contemptuously toward them. “How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents” (1 Sam 10:27).

Secondly, they sin when they are *inwardly opposed to and have an aversion for their superiors*. This can be the result of the superior being too insignificant in their eyes—as is true for some children who, having advanced somewhat in the world, are ashamed of their parents, do not want to see them, wishing that they were either far away or dead. This can also occur when a superior makes himself hateful by pride, miserliness, drunkenness, or other sins, and because subordinates desire to be the master themselves.

Thirdly, they sin when they are *unfaithful*; that is, when they do not take care of the belongings of their parents—such as when they foolishly waste or neglect money or clothing. They sin when they secretly rob them of something delightful, or deprive them of other things, as if they had more liberty to do this than when stealing from others. “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer” (Prov 28:24). They sin when they are lazy and lax in learning to read, write, or in learning a trade; or else when they make no effort to help their father and mother earn a living and keep the family solvent. To this also belongs involvement in fraudulent transactions—generally referred to as smuggling—whereby one, as much as possible, renders the government incapable of promoting the general good of the nation.

Fourthly, they sin when they are *disobedient*, not acknowledging the fact that God has given their superiors a position over them, but reject this. This is manifested by resisting this reality, not doing what the superiors command, doing what they forbid, grumbling, talking back, arguing, and wanting to withdraw from the duty of obedience. It can furthermore be manifested by wishing to compel superiors not to give certain orders, by wishing to dominate them, and by compelling the superior to do as it pleases the subordinate.

Fifthly, they sin when they *mock* with their superiors, or ridicule them when they see their weaknesses, are rancorous and chagrined, grumbling and snapping when they find fault in them—or, when they are of the opinion that their superior does not conduct himself correctly and wisely, imagining that it ought to be otherwise.

Consider all this together and observe all who are comprehended in the words “father and mother.” Consider in which subordinate and/or superior relationship you are to others. Consider furthermore the duties of superiors toward subordinates and of subordinates toward superiors, and then examine yourself as to how you have conducted yourself to any who are superior to you, and how you have conducted yourself toward those who are in a subordinate relationship to you. Consider your sins, humble yourself concerning them, and seek forgiveness. Be stirred up to order your way in the future in harmony with this commandment. To that end there needs to be a vivid reflection upon the incentive conjoined to this commandment.

The Incentive Conjoined to this Commandment

The incentive added to this commandment is as follows: “... that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exod 20:12). Death, which is unnatural, has come upon the human race, and even though for believers it is not a punishment for sin, they must nevertheless all die. Life itself is a blessing, and therefore a longer life is a further blessing. Life is desirable, and no one delights in death. The longer one lives, the longer he enjoys that which is delightful. “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good” (Ps 34:12).

Objection: Is it not better to be in heaven than upon earth? Is an early death therefore not better for the godly? How can the promise of a long life then be desirable?

Answer: First, there is no distinction here between an eternal, felicitous life and temporal life, but between death and life. *Secondly*, a believer can perform many things upon earth which are subservient to the glory of God and the welfare of both the church and other people. No one can do this in heaven and the saints were therefore very desirous to live, saying, “For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks” (Ps 6:5). From this perspective a long life is a blessing. *Thirdly*, one must not only apply the blessing of a long life to individual persons, but also to a family—that is, each in his tribe and the nation in general. Israel would thus remain long in Canaan, each nation in its own land, and every tribe would continue its lineal descent.

The lengthening of days is not only promised, but there is also added: *in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. This refers to a long and peaceful life in one’s own land in contrast to exile and banishment outside of the homeland. For Israel, this land was Canaan—a fruitful and delightful piece of land which God had

promised to Abraham and his seed. Israel had to occupy this land because the Messiah had to be born there. For every believer, however, it is that country which is his homeland or the country of his residence. This is according to Paul's testimony: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:3). It is a blessing to live long and peacefully in one's own country. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov 16:31).

Exhortation to Superiors

You, therefore, who have been placed over others, be diligent to conduct yourself well, in harmony with this commandment.

- (1) The names "father" and "mother" necessitate this, amiably and efficaciously obligating you to do so.
- (2) Nature teaches that a superior ought to engage his entire person and ability for the benefit of his subordinates. Go to the animals and they will teach you; go to the heathen and they will convince you.
- (3) God has given you an honorable position for that purpose and adorned you with this glory.
- (4) You will have to give an account to God for your government, and if you have been unfaithful, the damnation of subordinates will certainly be required from your hands in the day of judgment.
- (5) However, if you are faithful, a blessing will come upon your children and upon others who are in subordination to you. How sweet it will be to be able to say on the last day, "Behold, here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!"

Exhortation to Children and Subordinates

And you children, and all who are in a subordinate position to others—see to it that you neither grieve nor cause your parents, and those who have been placed over you, to groan due to your disobedience and opposition, for:

First, it is a dreadful sin, a sin associated with the most ungodly times. "In thee have they set light by father and mother" (Ezek 22:7); "For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (Mic 7:6); "... disobedient to parents" (Rom 1:30; cf. 2 Tim 3:2). It is an assault upon God, human society, and is contrary to nature—so that it is the most abominable of all abominations, even being repulsive in a natural sense.

Secondly, such persons will not escape the wrath of God. Hear the threatenings which God pronounces upon them. They do not

only subject themselves to the curse pronounced upon all transgressors of the law, but these specific judgments will also come upon such: “Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness” (Prov 20:20); “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it” (Prov 30:17). This means that they will come upon the gallows. “Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen” (Deut 27:16). They will be cursed both here and forever.

Thirdly, consider the following examples: There is *Ham*, whose son Canaan and all his descendants were cursed by God (Gen 9:22, 25); there is *Reuben*, who was rejected from the right of the *firstborn* and whose tribe was the *first* to be eradicated (Gen 49:3-4); *the sons of Eli*, who perished miserably (1 Sam 4:11); *Absalom*, who was killed in a frightful manner in battle and was buried with contempt under a heap of stones (2 Sam 18:14, 17); and there are the *forty-two children* who mocked Elisha and were torn apart by bears (2 Kings 2:24).

Final Incentives Given for Obedience

Just as we must be deterred from these sins by prior judgments, we must, nevertheless, not be satisfied with refraining from evil. Rather, with our whole heart we must endeavor to honor and obey father and mother, and all who have been placed over us—each in their own rank. Consider to that end:

First, the express command of God—the majestic, glorious, sovereign, all-knowing, and righteous Lawgiver—who is able to save and destroy. You neither sin against men only, nor are disobedient to men only, but you do so against God Himself.

Secondly, take notice of the authority with which God has vested father, mother, and all superiors. Yes, consider it to be a reflection of God’s majesty, and let this motivate you to be respectful and willing to joyously honor and obey them.

Thirdly, consider the love, care, and labor which they expend, in order that all may be well with you. Consider the joy and delight which they experience when you conduct yourself well toward them, and their sorrow and grief if you despise them and are disobedient to them. If there is therefore a spark of natural love in you, you will be motivated to honor and obey them.

Fourthly, meditate much upon the blessings which the Lord bestows upon obedient children. *Shem and Japheth* were blessed by the Lord because they honored their father, and it was promised

to them that the church and the means of grace would be among their children (Gen 9:26-27). The following remarkable text ought to be imprinted in the hearts of all children, and parents ought to make them memorize it in their youth: “And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever” (Jer 35:18-19).

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

The Sixth Commandment

The sixth commandment pertains to human life, which is the most precious thing that man possesses. God created man to live, but due to sin, death has come into the world. However, God Himself wants to be the executioner of the sentence, and thus forbids all men to do so, saying: “Thou shalt not kill” (Exod 20:13).

Murder is the removal of human life by abusing the body to such an extent that the soul can no longer remain there. This neither applies to the *vegetative* life of trees and herbs, nor to *animal life*, for God has given both to the benefit of man. (The killing of animals may, however, not proceed from cruel motives.) Rather, the killing which is forbidden here pertains to human life. God gives the following reason for this: “For in the image of God made He man” (Gen 9:6). Even though man has lost the image of God, He nevertheless created him in His image in the beginning, and man has still retained the picture frame which at one time contained the painting: the spirituality, invisibility, and immortality of the soul. He is still gifted with the faculties of the soul—intellect and will. It is therefore God’s will that one person not kill another person.

All Homicide Not Forbidden

The following four instances are not included in the homicide forbidden here. First, *there is the putting to death of a murderer by the government*. For God has commanded this: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen 9:6); “For he (*the government vested with authority*) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:4). He who

forgives a murderer is opposed to the commandment of God and is an accomplice to the murder. “Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death ... for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Num 35:31, 33). Yes, even if the murderer fled to the altar in the temple, he had to be taken from there and be put to death. “Thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die” (Exod 21:14). Popery does exactly the opposite by designating their churches and monasteries as neutral zones for murderers.

Secondly, *the killing of an enemy in a lawful war* also is not included in the homicide which is forbidden. A war is lawful when enemies conspire to attack a nation that has not offended them, but which dwells quietly and peacefully—these enemies robbing them of their goods and making the people their bond servants. If the government of such a country then arms itself against such enemies, resists violence with violence, punishes them, and renders them incapable of returning, this is a righteous undertaking whereby the wicked are punished, and good persons are protected both personally as well as relative to their religion and belongings. The legality of such wars is not only abundantly evident in 1) the Old Testament, where God commanded them and prescribed the time and manner of attack, as well as promising to deliver up the enemy, but 2) also in the New Testament. John the Baptist baptized soldiers and rather than commanding to forsake warfare, he exhorted them to be satisfied with their wages and not to be a burden to anyone (Luke 3:14). The centurion is praised for his faith and was not dismissed from his service (Matt 8:10, 13). Cornelius the centurion, a godly man, was visited by Peter, and while Peter was preaching he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no word of rebuke, however, nor of being dismissed from his service (Acts 10:2, 33-34). Paul declares that the government is of divine origin and that it bears the sword to take vengeance upon the wicked and to protect the good (Rom 13:1-3).

Objection: The *Anabaptists*, having had a bad experience at *Munster*, no longer approve of wars, and maintain that it is unlawful to engage in war. In support of this they advance Matt 5:39-40, 44 “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.”

Answer: These texts do not refer to the work of civil authorities, for they have been commanded to do so. Rather, Christ commands

that private individuals may not take vengeance upon each other, but instead must bear with and yield to each other. Yes, their heart must be inclined to do good to their enemies and to pray for them. The rebuke addressed to Peter upon drawing the sword is of the same nature, the declaration being that those who take the sword will perish with the sword (Matt 26:52). The Lord Jesus speaks of *private individuals*—and not of the civil authorities—of *taking* the sword and not of receiving the sword from God (Rom 13:4).

Thirdly, *inadvertent manslaughter* also is not included in the homicide which is forbidden. This is true, for instance, when a person falls down from a house and dies; or if upon using an axe, its head slips from the handle and kills a bystander or passer-by without the person using it having any intent to do so. This is evident in the following passages: “And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee” (Exod 21:13); “Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live” (Deut 19:4-5). One can, however, be guilty of carelessness here.

Fourthly, *the slaying of one's neighbor out of self-protection* is also not included in the forbidden homicide. This occurs when either a murderer, a person who is in a fit of wrath, or a demented person attacks someone in order to slay him. The person being attacked flees as far as he can and is overcome in such a way that he can no longer flee. He calls for help, warns the attackers, but there comes no relief. He either must permit himself to be killed, or he must in self-defense kill the attacker. If he kills him, he is not guilty of bloodshed; rather, this is referred to as *moderamen inculpatae tutelae*, that is, *self-defense*. One is obligated to preserve his life and this is the only objective here. If this culminates in the death of the other person, the attacker is guilty and not the person being attacked.

The Sins Forbidden

The homicide which is forbidden here can be considered either in regard to the object (or the external deed), or in reference to the internal disposition of heart. The objects are either man himself or his neighbor.

The first major sin is suicide. This sin varies in degree.

(1) This sin is committed when a person actually and intentionally deprives himself of his life, be it by way of hanging, drowning,

use of sharp objects, poison, or in any other manner. Such people are of evil dispositions, fretful and peevish, and are neither able nor willing to endure discomfort. They renounce God, heaven, and hell, and imagine that with their death they will put an end to their unpleasant circumstances. This is the work of ungodly men, and is tantamount to plunging alive into hell and eternal damnation.

(2) To this also belongs the doing of injury to one's health by wasting one's strength through indulging in lascivious lusts. By this one will bring illnesses upon himself which God inflicts in retribution upon such sins. This also pertains to overindulgence in eating and the drinking of alcoholic beverages, excessive sleeping, or by robbing the body of what it needs by withholding food and shelter.

(3) To this belongs the departure from ordinary conduct by unnecessarily endangering one's self by mountain climbing, diving, and approaching too near to the enemy out of curiosity.

(4) To this belongs fighting in a duel in response to an intentional challenge to do so, for one knows that he will either be killed, become a murderer himself, or be killed and commit murder simultaneously. Such people are not courageous, but reckless fools with unstable emotions who are captive to their passions and cannot tolerate being wrong. The example of *David and Goliath* cannot be used in defense of this, for that pertains to a public war. David did this by faith and in the name of the Lord in order to punish Goliath for his blasphemy, doing so upon the order of King Saul.

(5) Furthermore, to this belongs the letting of a ship explode if one can no longer defend it. One thus does not permit the enemy to get it in its power; however, he does kill himself. Such was the deed of the ungodly Saul. In doing so, one kills all who are on the ship simultaneously, who in all probability are not aware of such intent, and would not have acquiesced in it. The end, however good it may be, does not justify the means. One cannot do evil in order that good may come out of it. The example of *Samson* does not vindicate such action. We must live according to rules and not according to examples. That example meets with no approbation anywhere in Scripture. The case is also not identical. If one can no longer defend himself, he must surrender. It is a matter of courage to fight as long as possible, and it is a matter of wisdom to yield to the conqueror.

(6) We can also add to this the murder of souls due to neglect and rejection of, opposition and disobedience to the means of grace, as well as the willful and reckless perseverance in sin—for the wages of sin is death. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” All

of this belongs to the sin of *suicide*, from which everyone must most carefully abstain.

The second major sin is the killing of one's neighbor. This is done, *first* of all, *in deed* with sharp objects, by drowning, by strangling, with poison, by withholding food and shelter, by leaving someone in the water or in some other danger, whom we were obligated to help, and either could have helped ourselves, or by calling for help.

Secondly, one can do so with *words*:

(1) By using sarcastic and biting language, thereby revealing one's own wrath and provoking the wrath of others to such a degree that they will kill. This almost cost *Nabal* and his household his life (1 Sam 25:10). Murder, definition of

(2) By falsely accusing someone, upon which the death of the accused and of others could follow or does follow. *Doeg* thus killed eighty-five priests with his accusation (1 Sam 22:18).

(3) By betraying others by word or letter. It is thus that the pious *Uriah* perished (2 Sam 11:15).

(4) By stirring up others against someone; in this manner the death of the Lord Jesus was required by the people (Matt 27).

(5) By betraying others in times of persecution for the sake of true religion, by which they could be killed or also shall be killed. "...And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

(6) By arguing, which provokes mutual wrath. Having an argument frequently degenerates into fighting and this in turn culminates in murder. "He loveth transgression that loveth strife" (Prov 17:19).

Thirdly, one can sin with his *countenance*, by looking at someone with a surly, cruel, and wrathful countenance—laughing at him, shaking the head, motioning and threatening with the fist, or with some other spiteful and provocative gestures. Thereby the murderous heart reveals itself and provokes others to wrath and murder. This is to be observed in *Cain*, *Laban*, *Israel*, and in the *Jews* with reference to Christ.

Fourthly, one can furthermore add to this the spiritual murder of his neighbor, which is done by ministers if they do not warn the ungodly (Ezek 13:18, 22). This is true when one either brings soul-destructive errors and heresies in vogue or promotes them; gives evil examples whereby others are enticed, deceived, or offended; keeps others away from the Word and the practice of religion; or persecutes and resists others for their godliness.

The third major sin is to have a murderous disposition of heart, although this may be restrained by reason, fear for punishment, the restraining power of God, or restraining grace.

To this belongs, *first* of all, *intense and wrenching envy or jealousy*.

This manifests itself in an inner gnawing, in being grieved if others fare well or even better than we, and if others receive more honor and love than we do personally. This begets unfriendliness both toward those who are doing so well, and against those who show so much honor, love, and favor to the others. The result of this is that we cannot deal with them in love, cannot bear to hear their voice, and cannot see them without being stirred within. We shall search out whether or not we can find fault, and if so, we shall make the most of it; and if we are too sly to do it publicly, we shall secretly deal with them in contempt and by underhanded methods. We are glad if we find someone who hates that person in question and speaks evil of him. We shall laugh and be delighted if the person being envied experiences something which is detrimental to his honor and good. If there are many who do not give heed to their heart and thus do not perceive this hidden serpent, or if there is no opportunity for this envy to manifest itself, one will readily recognize it by its mother, *self-love*, and sisters, *miserliness and ambition*. This envy belongs to murder, for one would like to see this person removed, and it occasionally engenders murder. This we observe in Cain (Gen 4), in the patriarchs relative to Joseph (Acts 7:9), and in the priests relative to Christ (Matt 27:18).

Envy is an abominable sin and an offense to all of humanity. People are therefore ashamed of this and conceal it as much as possible.

(1) It corrupts and consumes people's strength and health. "... but envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Prov 14:30).

(2) It is the cause of all confusion among people. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

(3) It is a work of the flesh—and sin which proceeds from sin, ends in sin, and ends in death. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ... envyings" (Gal 5:19-21).

(4) It opposes the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of believers. "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy" (James 4:5).

(5) It is a devilish sin to have an evil eye, for God is good. It is to accuse God of unrighteousness when He gives things to someone who is not worthy of it and ought not to have it. It is a desire that God be obligated to give the one more than another, a denial of God's providence, or a refusal to be subject to it. It is tantamount to designating one's self as a God. "... but who is able to stand before envy" (Prov 27:4).

Secondly, there is *hatred*. This is a *deep-seated anger*. At times this proceeds from envy and at others times from wrath, which cannot run its course, but instead is restrained, and one can thus not

avenge himself. One will harbor this until time and opportunity are there. Absalom waited about two years before executing his hatred toward Ammon. He who has such hatred is repulsed by the company of the one who is hated, and it is increased when he sees him or hears him speak—and even becomes greater the better the hated person fares. He strives for the demise of this person by slandering, dishonoring, and scorning the person. If he could or would dare to contribute more to his demise, he would do so.

Listen attentively to what God says concerning hatred. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15); “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart” (Lev 19:17). To this does not belong, however, the hatred against sin and sinners as such. In this manner David hated all vain thoughts and all who hated the Lord (Ps 119:113, 118). The congregation of Ephesus was praised because they hated the works of the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6).

Thirdly, there is *anger*. This is good if it correctly pertains to sin and sinners. It is thus stated concerning the Lord Jesus: “And when He had looked round about on them with anger ...” (Mark 3:5). However, that anger which is forbidden here is a sinful anger, which is an *intense hastiness to do evil to one’s neighbor*—a brief moment of frenzy. “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous” (Prov 27:4).

(1) It is murder in God’s sight and very frequently it ends in actual murder. “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt 5:22).

(2) Anger is enumerated among the works of the flesh (Gal 5:20).

(3) Anger prevents all good work and yields nothing but evil fruits. “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

(4) Anger is the work of fools. “Anger resteth in the bosom of fools” (Eccles 7:9).

(5) Anger is a cursed sin. “Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel” (Gen 49:7).

Fourthly, there is *revenge*. This is the inclination to retaliate against someone for a wrong actually committed or an imaginary wrong—yes, they are not satisfied with a retribution of a similar degree, but the least wrong which has been done to them is deserving of death in their eyes. This we observe in Lamech who said: “Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold” (Gen 4:23-24). It is a dreadful sin, for:

(1) It is putting of one’s self in the stead of God, an act of outright opposition toward God, and an accusation against God

for not immediately slaying the offender. Yes, such a person is not satisfied if God does it, but his own hand and his power must be observed here; he must execute it himself. God says, “To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense” (Deut 32:35).

(2) It is to render the devil the opportunity to incline his heart toward all evil according to his will. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil” (Eph 4:26-27).

(3) As long as someone harbors revenge in his heart, he is not permitted to pray—and if he prays, he is praying against himself. When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He immediately adds: “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:15).

(4) It is a sin upon which God pronounces a curse (Gen 49:7).

These are some of the chief sins against this commandment. If someone transgresses this commandment, he brings upon himself the curse which is pronounced upon transgressors of the law. He excludes himself from heaven and makes himself worthy of eternal damnation. “Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15); “But the ... murderers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the *second* death” (Rev 21:8).

The Virtues Enjoined

The virtues enjoined in this commandment are the following:

First, there must be *love for life*. This particularly relates to the life of our neighbor; that is, when we do not begrudge him his life, and rejoice in that he lives and prospers. We shall thus give diligence that his life be preserved, and utilize everything which would be subservient to that end. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10); “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (1 Cor 10:24).

Secondly, there must be *tolerance*; that is, any wrong that has been committed must be considered insignificant, and there must be no inclination toward retribution. It ought to be overlooked, as not having been committed, while maintaining a quiet and calm disposition toward him in love. “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any” (Col 3:13); “... forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2).

Thirdly, there must be a *seeking after and preservation of peace*; that is, we should not tolerate that our heart be displeased in the least degree toward anyone, and to endeavor that the heart of someone else also be thus inclined toward us. We shall then not be offended by someone’s misbehavior toward us, and we shall be no less

friendly toward him. “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3); “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps 34:14); “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). However peace must not be attained by covering or doing injury to the truth and godliness. “Therefore love the truth and peace” (Zech 8:19); “... righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps 85:10).

Fourthly, *meekness* is the very opposite of being stern, fretful, and irritable (so that one cannot touch or deal with the person). Rather, to be meek is to be as tender as a mole and as soft as silk, so that it is a delight to have dealings with such a person. It is to have a quiet and dispassionate disposition, and to manifest this by the enduring of wrong, by maintaining a consistently tender disposition, by forgiving wrongdoing as if it had not been committed, and by rendering good for evil—all this so that everyone may be convinced of their wrongdoing and cease doing wrong against us. A meek person is as a smooth beach upon which tempestuous waves break and then gently flow away, interacting, so to speak, in a playful manner with it.

(1) Meekness is an excellent ornament. “Whose adorning ... be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet 3:3-4).

(2) It is the garment of the saints. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col 3:12).

(3) A meek person is fit to serve God and God invites him to seek Him, being especially pleased with such a disposition. “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment” (Zeph 2:3).

(4) This is the foundational virtue from which many other virtues issue forth. The Lord Jesus therefore exemplified this and commanded that this be imitated. “And learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29).

(5) The meek have the promise that “they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). This does not only imply that they will possess the new heaven and earth after the last judgment, but also now they will have a peaceful portion, and enjoy what is theirs in quietness. People will not rage against such, but much rather will protect them, and if there comes opposition, they will overcome it with meekness. Solomon therefore says: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov 16:32).

Fifthly, Compassion there must be *compassion* if people experience some measure of trouble. We must have compassion with such persons and, so to speak, put our shoulder under their burden to help them carry it. We must be inclined to help them, doing so according to our ability, giving them food, drink, and clothing, serving them upon their sickbeds, and seeking to rescue their business. This is a precious disposition. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt 5:7); “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble” (Ps 41:1).

Sixthly, there must be *friendliness*. The opposite of this is to be gruff, impolite, arrogant, and to speak in a biting and grumbling manner. This is how Cain behaved himself toward Abel, Joseph’s brothers toward Joseph, and Laban toward Jacob. Instead, friendliness is the manifestation of a loving heart, revealing itself in one’s countenance and words. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men” (2 Tim 2:24).

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

The Seventh Commandment

Marriage: Divinely Instituted

After having created and adorned the heaven and the earth, God created living creatures. He created many animals at once, but He initially created only one human being—a man. Subsequently, He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, during which God removed a rib from him. From this He created a woman, Eve, and brought her to Adam to be his wife. Just as they were *first* one and subsequently became two, the Lord, by way of marriage, made them one again after this. “And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh” (Mark 10:8). After God had brought Adam and Eve together, He “blessed them, and ... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen 1:28). Thus, God instituted marriage and gave His blessing upon it, not only prior to the fall, but He also repeated this after the fall (Gen 3:16; 9:1). God Himself decrees who one’s wife will be and gives her to every man (Gen 24:44). “A prudent wife is from the Lord” (Prov 19:14). The Lord Jesus gave His approbation to marriage by honoring a wedding with His presence (John 2:11). Thus, “marriage is honourable in all” (Heb 13:4). This is also true for ministers, for Paul calls the prohibition of marriage a doctrine of devils (1 Tim 4:1), and it is furthermore a sign of the antichrist. Godly ministers, both in the Old and New Testaments, have been married. Aaron was married and had sons (Lev 1:7), Samuel was married and had children (1 Sam 8:2), Peter had a wife (Matt 8:14), and Paul had license to take a wife, as was also true for the other apostles (1 Cor 9:5).

As God instituted marriage, the Lord likewise created in man

the ability and inclination to procreate. This inclination is good in and of itself, but after the fall everything in man has become corrupted and distorted. Man is also in this respect distorted and frequently desires the means more than the end. Yes, he frequently fears the end, and with heated fervor entertains himself with the means. Consequently he indulges in various sins in this respect, as to both manner and objects—sins which are forbidden in the *seventh* commandment.

The Sins Prohibited

The sins which are forbidden here are numerous. We shall organize them under the following main headings: actions, gestures, words, thoughts, lusts, and opportunities. To *unchaste actions* belong the following:

First, there is *adultery*, which occurs when a married man or woman has a relationship with another person—either married or unmarried. If this sin is committed by two married persons, then there is double adultery. If it is committed by a married and an unmarried person, there is single adultery. Not only does the married person commit adultery, but also the unmarried person.

Secondly, there is the *desertion* of one's spouse without adultery being the cause. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away" (Mal 2:16); "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt 5:32); "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Cor 7:12, 15). If the one spouse commits adultery, then the other spouse may leave the adulterous one, file for divorce, and remarry. The person that has been divorced due to committing adultery may not remarry, and whoever marries such a person also commits adultery. If a spouse divorces rashly, that is, without fornication being the cause, such a spouse will be the cause of sin if the one who has been divorced commits fornication. The one who is the cause of the divorce may not remarry, even though this was practiced in Israel. In such a case, where the sin remained, there was the stipulation that the one who was deserted be given a bill of divorcement (Matt 19:7). This is, however, contrary to God's commandment. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6). The one who has been divorced, however, is not obligated to

remain unmarried, but rather is permitted to remarry. However, to divorce for reasons other than fornication is adultery.

Thirdly, there is *incest*; that is, if persons who are too closely related enter into a relationship, be it outside of marriage or within marriage (although it is no marriage). The blood relationship is too close if the relationship is closer than cousins, that is, the children of brothers and sisters. Marriage between *first* cousins is not prohibited anywhere. The Lord has left man free in this, and such persons do not need to be secretly troubled about this in their heart. The degrees of relationship which are forbidden are parents with their children and grandchildren, this being true in all generations. It is also considered to be incest if one marries either two sisters or two brothers; that is, the one after the death of the other. It is incestuous to marry children of one's sister or brother; that is, if an uncle or an aunt marries someone whose uncle or aunt they are; or if a nephew or niece marries an uncle or an aunt in all descending degrees. To determine who are too near of kin, one must refer to Lev 18:6-18 and 20:11-12.

Fourthly, there is *sodomy*; that is, when men have intercourse with men and women with women (cf. Gen 19:5; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26-27). This is also the case when a human being has intercourse with an animal (Lev 18:23).

Fifthly, there is *fornication*; that is, when two single persons engage in intercourse with each other. This is prohibited everywhere (cf. Acts 15:20; 1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:19). This is aggravated when one has intercourse with various persons and thus is promiscuous, like dogs. This is also true if one uses his home as a brothel, engages prostitutes in the house for that purpose, or uses his home as a trap to allure and entangle all manner of persons. Persons engaging in this are an abomination, as well as those who could prevent this, but fail to do so (Deut 23:17)!

Sixthly, there is the commission of *personal fornication* (which Onan was guilty of), also referred to as "evil concupiscence" (Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5), and uncleanness and lasciviousness (Gal 5:19).

Seventhly, there is *polygamy*; that is, to have more than one wife simultaneously. This sin was initially committed by Lamech (Gen 4:18), and subsequently became common practice among Jews, Gentiles, and Moslems—both prior to and after the time of Christ. It is, however, contrary to the command and institution of God. "... and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt 19:5); "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). Thus, to have more than one wife is the

continual commission of adultery. The fact that it has been common practice, was practiced by the godly themselves, and was tolerated by God at that time, does not negate the sinfulness of these deeds. Fornication

Eighthly, there is *concubinage*; that is, when two unmarried persons without a lawful relationship live together as husband and wife. This is a continual act of fornication, confessed by the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-18). The rule is this: “But if they cannot contain, let them marry” (1 Cor 7:9).

Ninthly, there is *premarital intercourse* of engaged persons. This is contrary to what Joseph and Mary did (Matt 1:18), as well as contrary to 1 Cor 14:40: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” It is an act of uncleanness. If the man dies, the woman is then considered to be a whore and the child as the child of a whore. It frequently takes away the blessing from the marriage, having been begun in sin.

Unchaste *gestures* are committed *first* of all with the eyes; that is, when by way of observation one stirs up and stimulates his own filthy lusts. The Lord Jesus says concerning this: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt 5:28; cf. Ezek 23:14, 16). Peter speaks of “eyes full of adultery” (2 Pet 2:14). One also commits fornication with the eyes if, by ogling or casting lewd glances, one seeks to allure others to commit fornication.

Secondly, sin is also committed by making motions with hands, feet, and other members of the body, revealing one’s intention in such a way that it is readily understood by others. “Thou hast ... opened thy feet to every one that passed by” (Ezek 16:25).

Thirdly, carousing, kissing, and immodest caressing (Ezek 23:3, 8) belongs to this. “So she caught him, and kissed him” (Prov 7:13).

Fourthly, the wearing of inappropriate clothing and the attire of harlots, as well as the making bare of those members which for decency’s sake ought to be covered, also belongs to this. This is the manifestation of a heart that is bent on fornication and on alluring others to indulge in it.

Verbal unchastity is committed by recounting stories or fables that relate to fornication, by using indecent language, and by reading or listening to lewd books. This is indicative of an impure heart. “... for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45). And such language is able to stimulate yourself and others to commit fornication. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor 15:33).

Unchaste lusts and thoughts are those which, upon arising at

certain occasions, are retained and reflected upon. This also applies if a specific occasion is not the initial cause, but you stir up your own lusts by creating images in your fantasy, mentally reflect upon past fornication, or fantasize about given situations (of which one knows that they will not come to pass) in consequence of which fornication issues forth. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications” (Matt 15:19); “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord” (Prov 15:26); “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14); “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness” (Col 3:5).

The opportunities for fornication are many. These opportunities partly present themselves and partly are sought for.

First of all there is *dancing*. Even though the dancer, while dancing, has all to do to heed the musical instrument and to watch his step, fornication is nevertheless stimulated by way of observation.

(1) Dancing has always been despised by the saints and held in contempt by civilized heathen.

(2) It neither proceeds from God nor is commanded anywhere; rather, it proceeds from the world and belongs to the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes (1 John 2:16), as well as to the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph 5:11).

(3) It cost John the Baptist his life (Matt 14:6, 10), the daughters of Shiloh to be abducted (Judg 21), and Dinah to lose her honor (Gen 34:1-2). I do not believe that a dancer would be willing to die and appear before the judgment seat while dancing.

Secondly, there is the involvement in, or watching of, *comedy*. If one were to remove from comedy the vain use of God’s Name, pagan idolatry, the devil, abduction, rape, the manifestation of love between men and women, and foolish jesting, and would but display a historical event, then comedy would be no comedy. There would not be many who would watch it. However, those matters mentioned (and others of similar nature) provide the entertainment and it is therefore to be found in all comedies. This makes the heart exceptionally vain and fully occupies it, so that one reflects on this for days and nights. One imagines himself to be one of the players, or to be personally involved in a romance. This will ignite the lewdness which is hidden in the heart. One’s attendance, therefore, is not for the purpose of approaching unto God, but to find delight in vain pleasure. God’s judgment is not withheld from such, but He generally gives them over to themselves and to their vain and lewd heart. Occasionally He will punish some persons with insanity or even with death. We have experienced

an example of this, that a person laughed himself to death at a comedy. No one will dare to say that comedies proceed from God, but one must rather acknowledge that they proceed from the world—a world which a Christian must not love, for he who loves the world does not have the love of God in him (1 John 2:15), and is also deemed to be an enemy of God (James 4:4).

Thirdly, idleness has a great effect upon the heart and will stir it up to commit fornication; David experienced that (2 Sam 11). The young widows who idly wander from house to house wax wanton, according to Paul (1 Tim 5:11, 13). A pagan states: *Remove idleness, and you will remove fornication.*

Fourthly, there is *rioting and drunkenness*, to which the apostle adds wantonness. “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness” (Rom 13:13); “Look not thou upon the wine ... thine eyes shall behold strange women” (Prov 23:31, 33).

Fifthly, there is *social interaction* with men and women who are inclined toward fornication. Being in wrong company will cause you to err. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Prov 13:20).

Sixthly, there is the viewing of *lewd paintings*. The heart will be moved by whatever the eye sees. The fornication of the women in Israel was stimulated and they were enamored by seeing the images of the Chaldean men (Ezek 23:13-16).

Seventhly, there are *marriages between those who are unequal in years*, the one spouse being old and the other young. The young spouse may readily acquire an aversion for the older spouse. If one then desists from the use of one’s spouse, one will readily be enticed by unchaste lusts—if not deeds.

Eighthly, there are *domestic quarrels*. Quarrels between husband and wife will cause them to be estranged from each other. This then prevents one from fulfilling the obligations which love requires, and thus one’s corrupt nature will get the opportunity to manifest itself.

The Abominable Nature of this Sin and the Special Judgments Which God Executes upon It

These are the main areas of sin, and hereby you will have to examine yourself as to how innocent or guilty you are. In order to deter everyone from this sin, we shall demonstrate its abominable nature and the special judgments which God brings upon man due to this sin.

First, consider this sin in all its abominableness.

(1) It is the captain of all sin and is listed *first* among all the works of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,” etc. (Gal 5:19-21). Yes, the man who is addicted to this sin loses his heart. “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart” (Hos 4:11). Such a person is vulnerable to all sin. “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11).

(2) It runs counter to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers as in a temple. There He illuminates the heart, comforts, engenders prayer, answers prayers, and leads in the way of holiness. This sin, however, desecrates this temple. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor 3:16-17); “Flee fornication ... he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor 6:18-19).

(3) It runs counter to the suffering of Christ, who thereby has redeemed believers and made them His property. “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:15, 20).

(4) It runs counter to the heavenly calling whereby believers have been translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess 4:7).

(5) It is a dreadful act of contempt toward God and a provocation against Him. The presence of a person—yes, even a child—will prevent the commission of this sin due to being ashamed before him. Would not God’s presence then arouse shame? Would one dare to commit this sin before the eyes and the countenance of a holy God?

Secondly, consider and take note of the special judgments which God sends upon fornicators.

(1) There is a giving over to self and to sin, whereby one will lapse into the commission of the abominable acts of uncleanness—yes, even sodomy (Rom 1:27). One will be given over to spiritual adultery and idolatry and to a dying in sin. “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim 5:6).

(2) God brings great wrath upon them according to body and soul. Let Sodom be an example to you, of which Peter says, “The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment

to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness” (2 Pet 2:9-10). Consider also the example of the fornicating Israelites in the wilderness. “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Cor 10:8); “... whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4).

(3) Many will be eternally damned because of this sin. “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10); “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph 5:5); “But ... whoremongers ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the *second* death” (Rev 21:8).

The Virtues Enjoined

First, there must be in one’s heart a hatred and aversion for, and hostility toward all uncleanness of heart and whatever issues forth therefrom. “Hate the evil” (Amos 5:15); “Abhor that which is evil” (Rom 12:9); “... hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

Secondly, one must endeavor to have a heart marked by modesty, purity, and shamefacedness. “... that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim 2:9); “A bishop then must be sober. Even so must their wives be ... sober, faithful in all things” (1 Tim 3:2, 11); “He that hath ... a pure heart” (Ps 24:4); “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matt 5:8); “... that women adorn themselves ... with shamefacedness and sobriety” (1 Tim 2:9).

Thirdly, one must be chaste in all his actions—also those that pertain to the body. “... that I may present you as a chaste virgin” (2 Cor 11:2); “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2 Cor 7:1); “... keep thyself pure” (1 Tim 5:22).

Exhortation to Strive for Purity of Heart

Everyone ought to be on guard so that, consistent with the exhortation of the apostle, everyone may possess his vessel in sanctification and honor (1 Thess 4:4).

(1) We must know that we have the enemy within ourselves, that we carry the seed of uncleanness within, which will very readily shoot up if we do not carefully watch against this. Happy is he who has a true heart of a virgin, for when this sin takes hold, it cannot very easily be driven out. Therefore, watch!

(2) Carefully avoid all occasions which would stimulate this sin—be it via the eye or the ear. One must therefore watch very

carefully over these two senses. “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid” (Job 31:1).

(3) If an unclean motion arises in your heart, immediately shake it off as you would shake off fire from your clothes. Divert your thoughts immediately to something else. Here, fleeing is the best option. If, however, you do not reject the initial thought and you allow your thoughts but to reflect on it for a moment, you are conquered. This sin will flourish rapidly and will at once exercise great power.

(4) Be always engaged in honest activities. Even when you are free from obligations, do not let your flesh be idle. Arouse yourself to be engaged in your task with delight and earnestness, so that it may occupy your heart, and thus there will be neither room nor time for this filthiness.

(5) Be moderate in eating, drinking, and sleeping, for if there is a lack of moderation in these things, the body will be vulnerable for this sin and the lust for and yearning after this sin will arise that much easier.

(6) Avoid such people who are inclined toward this sin—be it that they are giving license to the flesh or that they are battling this sin. There can very easily be a word or something else which ignites a virgin heart. Furthermore, this sin will take hold all the more readily if one also is battling against this sin himself.

(7) Arm yourself with fear for God’s presence and omniscience. Pray continually: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” If it is common for this sin to frequently assault you, have days of fasting for this—and the Lord will help the person who is engaged in this battle.

(8) Always consider the consequences of this sin. It yields but a brief delight for the flesh and a long and bitter aftertaste for the soul. And if this aftertaste presents itself as a lively reality for you, you will then be able to reject its brief delight that much easier.

 CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment pertains to the possessions of our neighbor. The heaven and the earth are the Lord's. "The world is Mine, and the fulness thereof" (Ps 50:12); "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Ps 115:16). It is not true that everyone has an equal right to, and would equally enjoy each portion of, this world. However, just as God apportioned Canaan to Israel by lot, He likewise gives everyone his portion in this world, giving the one a greater portion than the other. That portion he will have—no more and no less. "Feed me with food convenient for me" (Prov 30:8). Man must be satisfied with this portion and expect it from the Lord by the means which have been ordained to that end. God has therefore expressly forbidden the acquisition of our portion, or a desire for increase, through unlawful means by saying, "Thou shalt not steal."

To steal is to take the possessions of our neighbor for ourselves. The perpetrator does this knowingly and without the knowledge of or contrary to the will of the owner.

The Sins Prohibited

The sins prohibited in this commandment can be reduced to the following heads: 1) *the object* to which these sins relate, 2) *the means* whereby they are committed, 3) *the manner* in which they are committed, and 4) *the cause* from which they proceed.

As far as the object is concerned, there are the following types of theft: 1) ecclesiastical theft, 2) the theft of men, 3) the defrauding of the nation, 4) the theft of cattle, 5) the theft of property, 6) armed robbery, and 7) to be an accomplice of thieves.

First, *ecclesiastical theft* consists in the following:

(1) *Taking to one's self goods and privileges*—for the purpose of either increasing one's own wealth, or to give it away to others—which have been given either for the maintenance of the church or of the poor. “It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy” (Prov 20:25); “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (Mal 3:8-9). Neither does the government have the authority to dispose of these goods, nor is anyone permitted to receive such goods, even if they are given by the government.

(2) *Simony* also belongs to this. The word “simony” is derived from Simon the Sorcerer, who wanted to buy the gifts of the Spirit from the apostles (Acts 8:18-20). This sin is committed if one purchases the ecclesiastical goods from those who have taken upon them the management of these goods. This sin is committed if one either receives or gives money to award a ministerial position to someone; or to receive it from those who claim to have the authority to either approve or disapprove. The latter is actually church robbery. It is a double offense if one uses that which has been usurped through robbery to either sell this position or to purchase the position from such a usurper—be it that one does so either personally or via friends, and then subsequently gives it back to the perpetrator. Such persons are thieves and murderers who do not enter the sheepfold through the right door (John 10:7-10). This sin is also committed when the elders of the church, who are authorized to elect ministers and elders, do this to gain the favor of men or of friends.

Secondly, there is *the theft of human beings*.

(1) This sin is committed in those countries where slave trade is practiced. This is stated in Exod 21:16: “And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death” (cf. 1 Tim 1:10).

(2) They who steal children sin, where they are enamored with their charm, or that they are to be used for beggary, in order to move people to pity—all this while abusing them and making them miserable.

(3) Included are *monastery thieves*—be they male or female—who lure children who anticipate a good inheritance from their parents, to make a vow to live in their monasteries without the knowledge of their parents. Or else they do so to give to the monasteries or the priests that which they have defrauded from their parents. “But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be

profited by me; he shall be free. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition” (Mark 7:11, 13).

(4) To this also belongs the abduction of young females, the engagement of minors with the promise of marriage (without the knowledge of, or contrary to, the will of the parents), eloping, and engaging young people for sexual purposes. In doing so parents are robbed of their best possession, and of those toward whom they exercise the most love. “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer” (Prov 28:24). Experience teaches that God generally sends a curse upon such people.

A third type of theft is *the defrauding of the nation* by either the government or citizens. *Government* officials are guilty of this if they do the following:

- (1) secretly use general tax revenues for themselves;
- (2) under cover of a different name, give a gift and charge their tenants in order to share the expense;
- (3) solicit contracts for work or ships and cause a certain party to receive the contract if there is a certain amount of money in it for them;
- (4) extend the time for commissions in order to collect that many more fees;
- (5) inflate the bills for incurred costs, thus enabling their carriage occasionally to be drawn by two horses;
- (6) either give away or sell official positions to friends who are not qualified. They do not own these offices and it is to the detriment of the country if these positions are awarded to unqualified persons. Those who purchase those positions are generally dishonest people who, in a dishonest way, try to regain their money from this position;
- (7) when draft officials count shadows for soldiers and allow multitudes of sailors to remain at large unless the captains give them bribes.

Consider the following passages in reference to this: “Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards” (Isa 1:23); “Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey” (Ezek 22:27); “... her rulers (what a shame it is!) with shame do love, Give ye” (Hos 4:18).

Citizens are guilty of defrauding the nation when their billing for delivered goods is higher than it ought to be, and when they conspire with corrupt government officials to share the profits of that in which they are mutually involved. It occurs when they deal fraudulently, smuggle, or are guilty of illicit dealings in reference

to tariffs, excise fees, valuation charges, etc. This is contrary to what we read in the following passages: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matt 22:21); “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom” (Rom 13:7). If you argue that the government takes too much, and that you thus cannot remain profitable, then you ought to know that we must be subject “not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward” (1 Pet 2:18).

Fourthly, there is *the theft of cattle*. The stealing of horses, cows, sheep, and swans belongs to this, as well as the trapping of forbidden game by those who are not authorized to do so. To this belongs also the trapping of rabbits on leased land, the catching of fish in ponds and rivers which have been leased, and fishing with illegal nets and at illegal times. “If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep” (Exod 22:1).

Fifthly, there is *the theft of commodities*; that is, when one steals personal property such as silver, gold, jewelry, clothing, grass, corn from the field, fruit out of orchards and gardens, and whatever else it may be. Such theft is aggravated when it occurs by breaking into a house, and even more if the break-in occurs by night (Exod 22:2-3). The following passages relate to this: “But let none of you suffer as ... a thief” (1 Pet 4:15); “Nor thieves ... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:10).

Sixthly, there is *armed robbery*, which takes place on water or on land. Robbery at sea is referred to as pirating. To such robbery belongs the violent vanquishing of merchant ships belonging to citizens of a hostile government. The intent of such robbery is not to do damage and injury to the enemy so that he can do less harm; it is not done in obedience to the government and out of love for the homeland. Rather, it is motivated by a desire to enrich one’s self with the business proceeds of other businessmen. Such robbery is called robbery of the privileged. If such robbery occurs on land it is called highway robbery. This is distinguished from general theft in that it is accompanied with the use of violence toward the owner, and is committed covertly. The following passages speak of such robbery. “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him” (Lev 19:13); “We shall fill our houses with spoil” (Prov 1:13); “... nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:10).

Seventhly, it is prohibited to be an *accomplice to thieves*; that is, to harbor them and provide them with a safe abode in order to share in that which has been stolen. This includes the purchase of commodities of which one knows or suspects that they have been stolen, doing

so since one can get them for half price. If there were no receivers (or fences) for stolen goods there would be no thieves; the receiver is as bad as the thief. Consider the following passages: “When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him” (Ps 50:18); “Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul” (Prov 29:24).

The Means Whereby Theft Is Committed

The means whereby theft is committed are the following:

First, *there is usurpation*; that is, the oppression of those who are of low social status by either not paying them, or by having or retaining that which is theirs. This occurs if one files suit against those from whom one has purchased something, or if one keeps litigation pending against those of lower social status who have no recourse. “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats” (James 2:6). This is what the ungodly Jezebel did to obtain Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21:15). The apostle warns against this. “That no man go beyond ... his brother in any matter” (1 Thess 4:6).

Secondly, there is the deceit of one’s neighbor while *creating the appearance of right*. “That no man ... defraud his brother in any matter” (1 Thess 4:6); “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour” (Lev 19:13).

(1) This can occur relative to *weight*; that is, one uses weights which are too heavy when purchasing and weights which are too light when selling. This also occurs when the scale is faulty or if one manipulates the scale in a deceitful manner.

(2) This can occur relative to *measurement*; that is, if one over-measures when purchasing, and one under-measures when selling; or if, when measuring the material, one skillfully cuts it short or stretches it.

(3) This can occur relative to *volume*; that is, enlarging the volume when purchasing and decreasing it when selling; or if one shakes up the merchandise in such a manner that the measure appears to be full—this however not being the case. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have” (Lev 19:35-36); “Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord” (Prov 20:10); “A false balance is abomination to the Lord” (Prov 11:1).

(4) One can be deceitful as far as *merchandise* is concerned; that is, by displaying and selling merchandise of a certain quality and delivering merchandise of poorer quality. One does this by corrupting the merchandise, intermixing it with something else—for instance, when mixing chaff with the flour and then subsequently selling it as good bread. One does this by making the merchandise

moist or by intermixing it with some heavy material which results in the weight being less than it ought to be. One does this by means of deceptive illumination, causing material to look differently. One does so by downplaying merchandise he wishes to purchase in order to cause the salesman to sell it below value; or, if one elevates the value and promotes it as such in order to sell it above value. “It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth” (Prov 20:14); “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death” (Prov 21:6). One does so if he demands too high a price for merchandise; hereby the ignorant are deceived.

Question May one sell merchandise for a lower price than was originally demanded?

Answer: One may demand the highest price which is current at the market, and also receive it without the buyer being deceived. If, however, one wishes to reduce this reasonable profit somewhat—and thus gain less—he is permitted to bargain downward to some degree.

(5) One can be deceitful with *coins*; that is, knowingly spending money which is either too light, of a false alloy, or counterfeit, and giving it out as good money or intermixing it with the good, allowing it to pass into circulation unnoticed.

(6) One can also steal by means of *usury*. If one purchases the merchandise for a low price and in the meantime the price increases (yes, 50% or more), and if he then sells according to current market price, the profit is not unlawful, even if his gain were to double. Profit is not unlawful if one skillfully improves the merchandise—even if he can transform something which is worth a nickel into something worth fifty cents. Profit is also lawful if one collects interest for money which has been loaned out. This must be consistent, however, with the current rate and according to the rule of love and righteousness. However, profit is unlawful (which is called usury among us) if one gains interest from his money and merchandise which supersedes the current rate. The more excessive this usury is, the greater is the theft. Merchants who bleed the poor as blood suckers are guilty of this. They extend credit to the poor, but sell them the merchandise far above the common market price, giving them the poorest quality as well.

Question Must one also not charge something for the long absence of one’s money as well as for the risk involved (since it happens occasionally that one never sees his money again)?

Answer: You ought to make known to the borrower up front that you intend to charge much more for the merchandise, the extended

credit, and the risk involved, so that the poor may know this and make the choice themselves as to whether they wish the interest to be that high. Furthermore, the interest must be charged according to the rule of love and righteousness. It is better at the outset to refer the poor to the deacons than to *first* bleed them.

To the *sin of usury* also belongs the activity of *pawnshop operators* who take all manner of securities from the poor, such as essential clothing and tools whereby they must earn a living, and who furthermore charge such excessive interest that within a short time their entire capital is gone. “If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep” (Exod 22:26-27).

The Various Manners in Which Theft is Committed

The manners in which theft is committed are of such a diverse nature that all cannot be enumerated. Every rogue acts consistent with the trade he plies.

First, there is the case when lawyers and prosecutors *keep legal cases pending* to extort the parties involved, and who knowingly defend evil cases.

Secondly, there is the *drafting of fraudulent wills, contracts, obligation, and receipts* for the sake of making illicit gain. This also pertains to fraudulent billing.

Thirdly, there is the *withholding or reduction of wages*. “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth” (James 5:4).

Fourthly, there is *purchasing on credit*, while knowing all along that one either will not or cannot pay. Bankrupt persons who take out loans everywhere are guilty of this. They are especially guilty if they know that their estate is insolvent and they have the intent to disappear or file for bankruptcy. “The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again” (Ps 37:21).

Fifthly, there is the *establishing of a monopoly*; that is, the conspiring of some to have the market to themselves, especially if they do this relative to grain and other edible commodities, not selling them below such an excessive price. “He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him” (Prov 11:26).

Sixthly, there is *the undermining* of a neighbor’s business. This is not to imply that one may not live where he pleases or seek the trade of his choice in lawful ways; rather, this occurs when he seeks to rob the other of his trade by deceit, slander, and libel.

Seventhly, there is *the idling away of time* by loafing and loitering,

just to spend the day doing as little as possible. “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand” (Prov 10:4); “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute” (Prov 12:24).

Eighthly, there is *laziness*: “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster” (Prov 18:9); “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard. ... So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Prov 6:9, 11). Concerning laziness the following is true:

(1) God hates laziness; every *firstling* of an ass either had to be redeemed or the neck had to be broken (Exod 13:13).

(2) A sluggard is abominable to everyone; he is “as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes” (Prov 10:26).

(3) A sluggard is a fit instrument for the devil—an accomplice to the devil (1 Tim 5:12).

(4) A sluggard is a burden to himself, and his way “is as an hedge of thorns” (Prov 15:19).

(5) A sluggard makes himself poor (Prov 6:11).

(6) Laziness engenders fornication and theft.

Ninthly, there are *squanderers*, who always want to eat something good, carouse, drink, dress expensively, and thus not only squander their possessions, but subsequently borrow everywhere and at last are unable to pay back. Gambling belongs to this, for if you win, your gain is unjust, and if you lose, you are either robbing yourself or your loved ones. “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished” (Prov 13:11); “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty” (Prov 23:20-21).

Tenthly, there are *healthy beggars*, who go either from door to door or to certain benevolent persons—all because they do not want to work. When they do have some funds, they consume all that they have in an excessive manner, and thus live from the sweat of another. “If any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thess 3:10-12).

Eleventhly, there is the maintenance of *bars* for drunkards and gamblers—bars which make their living from whatever wives and children are deprived.

Twelfthly, there is the secret *concealment of goods that have been found*, keeping them for one’s self, without making any effort to strive that the owner receives them again. “Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them:

thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself" (Deut 22:1-3).

Thirteenthly, there is the *inappropriate use of rented and borrowed items*; that is, to ruin them in such a way that initially it is not visible, but becomes evident soon afterwards.

Fourteenthly, there is *cruel behavior toward impotent debtors*. "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov 22:7). For by such cruelty—even wanting to get something where nothing is to be had—one may force them to engage in evil practices.

The Cause of Theft

As far as the cause of theft is concerned, it issues forth from covetousness.

(1) This manifests itself in the disposition of the heart which lusts after many possessions and after that which is beautiful, glorious, and delightful to the eyes. One then seeks to take possession through either just or unjust means. "... an heart they have exercised with covetous practices" (2 Pet 2:14).

(2) It manifests itself in a greedy pursuit after profit and in finding delight in making gain—yes, even if it is in an appropriate manner. This is something which seldom remains true. Covetousness blinds one for seeing what is right. *Covetousness deludes wisdom*: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim 6:9-10).

(3) It manifests itself in miserliness, be it that one neither meets his own needs nor provides for his own nourishment, or he does not help another, leaving him destitute in his need. If something needs to be given, it is as little as possible and given with much reluctance, although it appears to be a very great matter in the eyes of the miser, and he will long reflect upon the fact that he has given such and such. To the root and cause of thievery one can also relate *slothfulness*, *squandering*, and other sins mentioned in the foregoing.

The Virtues Enjoined

The virtues commanded in this commandment are the following:

First, we are enjoined to love righteousness. “To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3); “... and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly” (Mic 6:8).

Secondly, we are enjoined to be diligent. “... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thess 3:12). For:

- (1) diligence renders all labor effective;
- (2) God commands diligence;
- (3) the Lord commands His blessing there and through diligence one comes to honor (Prov 13:24)
- (4) diligence makes rich (Prov 10:4; 13:4);
- (5) all is done with ease, and work becomes a delight.

Thirdly, we are commanded to be moderate in eating, drinking, and clothing. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

Fourthly, we are commanded to be generous, and to use our possessions to meet the needs of those who are truly poor—thus preventing that they will stretch forth their hands to unrighteousness. “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16).

Fifthly, we are enjoined to be content. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5); “But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim 6:6, 8).

Sixthly, we are enjoined to follow the golden rule. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt 7:12).

Exhortation to Self-examination

Now turn to yourself and examine yourself in light of the virtues and vices mentioned above. How do you fare? Open your containers and closets, and observe your money, clothing, home decorations, as well as your homes, orchards, and fields—and then answer this question: *How did you acquire all these?* If you perceive that you have not acquired them lawfully, restore that which you have obtained in an evil manner, for otherwise you are not permitted to pray (Isa 1:16-17; 1 John 3:20).

Evasive Argument #1: I have stolen so much; if I had to return everything I would be a beggar.

Answer: It is better to be a beggar than a thief.

Evasive Argument #2: I will come to shame.

Answer: There are ways whereby one can make secret restitution so that the owner receives again what is his, and yet does not know from where it originates.

Evasive Argument #3: I am not acquainted with those whom I have shortchanged.

Answer: Then give it to the poor; however, not as an alms, but in order that you may be relieved from your debt. If you maintain that it is beyond your means to make restitution, then go to the Lord and confess your sins. May it grieve you that you cannot make restitution; moreover, seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ.

In the future guard against this sin, for:

(1) theft is an atheistic deed; it denies the providence of God;

(2) it is idolatrous, for you are putting your trust in possessions, so that you may live from them: “Covetousness ... is idolatry” (Col 3:5);

(3) it spoils your own possessions, for God sends forth a curse upon that which is stolen. “I will bring it (*the curse*) forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief” (Zech 5:4). In order to be kept from this sin, arm yourself with the fear of God, who sees everything, and “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Ps 37:5); “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Ps 55:22); “... be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5).

 CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

The Ninth Commandment

The ninth commandment pertains to the reputation and the good name of our neighbor. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Prov 22:1). Having a good name enables one to be of benefit to his neighbor both in society and in the church. Not having a good name, however, incapacitates a person and it even renders him incapable of having pleasant interaction with men. A pagan said, “Even if you would lose everything, take special care of your good name, for once you have lost it, you amount to nothing.” Man loves his good name, and the law requiring love also teaches us to love the name of our neighbor, promote it, and abstain from injuring it. The contents of this commandment are as follows: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exod 20:16).

Our neighbors are not only our bosom friends and neighbors, but all children of Adam. They are all men who could be in need of our help and friendship (or we of theirs), as the Lord Jesus teaches in the parable of the man who fell into the hands of murderers. He was neither helped by a passing priest nor by a Levite, but by a stranger and a Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Witness is a declaration, and thus an announcement, concerning the good or evil conduct of our neighbor. *To bear false witness* is to make a declaration contrary to the truth of the matter and contrary to that of which we are aware—which is even more abominable if it occurs to the detriment of our neighbor. To this also belongs bearing witness with an evil motive, in an evil manner, and with an evil objective.

The Sins Prohibited

We organize *the sins against this commandment* under the following

headings: 1) bearing false witness; 2) the twisting of someone's words; 3) backbiting; 4) slander; and 5) the deceitful use of words.

First, we can bear *false witness* either within the courtroom or outside of it. This occurs in the courtroom when:

(1) *A judge*, due to inability to see through the matter, being remiss in making a sufficient effort to be thoroughly acquainted with the case, fear of man, wanting to do someone a favor, or in anticipation of a bribe, issues an unrighteous sentence, injures justice, or executes it erroneously. "And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chron 19:6-7); "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Prov 17:15). This was David's sin when he rashly, on the basis of Ziba's accusation, judged Mephibosheth (2 Sam 16:4). Job conducted himself differently, for he says of himself: "The cause which I knew not I searched out" (Job 29:16).

(2) *The prosecutor* brings someone into court about a matter which he either knows not to be right, or is in doubt about, and who, together with a clever lawyer, seeks to guide this case through, as the Jews thought they could do with Tertullus against Paul (Acts 24:1). Against Paul they produced many and serious accusations which they could not prove (Acts 25:7).

(3) *The defendant* denies that of which he knows himself to be guilty, seeking to rectify this by plea-bargaining, being richer than his opposing party. Thus, Cain, having been summoned, denied that he knew where his brother was whom he had killed (Gen 4:9).

(4) *Lawyers, solicitors, and notaries* know, or are able to know, that certain matters are evil and untrue, but give it a different twist in order to keep them pending for filthy lucre's sake. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa 5:20).

(5) *Witnesses*, not being well-acquainted with a matter, deliberately bear false witness, or cause the case to lean toward the party whom they favor most. They are guilty if they act hypocritically by using ambiguous words, or by either recounting or holding back circumstances, thus obscuring the truth. Such were Jezebel's witnesses against Naboth (1 Kings 21:13). Hear what Solomon says concerning such: "These six things doth the Lord hate: A false witness that speaketh lies" (Prov 6:16,19); "A false witness shall

not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape” (Prov 19:5).

In common conversation, that is, outside the courtroom, false witness is borne in various manners.

Secondly, there is the sin of *twisting someone’s words*. This occurs when one indeed recounts someone’s words, but by omitting or adding something changes their meaning (cf. Matt 26:61). One can also recount the very words themselves, but give them an entirely different meaning than the speaker had in mind. This was the device of the devil (Matt 4:6). Or else one can recount the very same words and matters, but change the circumstances of time, locality, and related matters, recounting it with a changed voice and gestures whereby the hearer will interpret the matter differently than had been expressed by the initial speaker. Observe this in Prov 4:24: “Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.”

Thirdly, there is *backbiting*. There is no sin which is so common among all manner of individuals as this vicious serpent which disturbs peaceful societal living and injures the honor of our neighbor.

First, this sin is committed by the *speaker* if he:

(1) States untrue things, that is, lies, in the absence of his neighbor, as Potiphar’s wife toward Joseph (Gen 39:17), Saul’s servants toward David (1 Sam 18:22), and Absalom toward his father (2 Sam 15:2).

(2) We sin if we recount things of which we are not certain, knowing them from hearsay and not knowing whether they be true or not. Or we sin if we add: “I do not know, but I have been told this, and I can mention the person who told me.” This is nevertheless something which does not promote the honor of our neighbor but only serves to create an evil impression of him. “Thou shalt not raise a false report” (Exod 23:1).

(3) We sin if we have a suspicion that someone has done this or that and we express that suspicion to others. The princes did this concerning David to their king Hanun (2 Sam 10:3).

(4) We sin if we recount the true faults of our neighbor—be it that they were hidden or that everyone knows of them. Thereby we show our delight that he has done wrong and we make the guilty party hateful by renewal—even if we then claim that we are troubled by it and that we would not say it if it were not so, and therefore are asking you not to repeat it. Even if one then recounts his virtues by adding the word “but,” the backbiter is nevertheless not excused. This causes the gossip to be the more readily accepted. “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Prov 26:22).

This does not apply if we make someone's committed offenses known to the elders of the congregation, for this is motivated by love and according to the command of the Lord Jesus (Matt 18:16). This is also not applicable if someone is in danger of being deceived by a mischievous person—be it by servants or in a different situation. Neither is this applicable when we are either asked or not asked about the conduct of such a person, and when we warn against such a person, knowing with certainty that someone is unfaithful. To do so is an act of love, which cannot be exercised in any different way than by identifying the unfaithful person.

(5) We are also guilty of backbiting if we but ask: "Have you heard this about so and so?" This also occurs if we make a great fuss about something without identifying what it is, implying that the issue is significant, while in the meantime remaining silent about it. This furthermore occurs if we indicate with our gestures that we despise such and such a person and harbor an evil suspicion about him. This is also the case if we casually recount something which in and of itself is not evil, but which nevertheless is capable of stirring up some thoughts which engender certain conclusions. In one word, we are guilty of backbiting if we say something about our neighbor which is capable of making him less esteemed and less loved. Regardless of whether this occurs intentionally, with evil motive, out of hatred, moved by envy, or due to thoughtlessness or talkativeness, the sin is committed, for there is a lack of love and a quiet aversion toward the neighbor in the heart.

Secondly, *the hearer* is guilty of backbiting:

- (1) if he inwardly delights that his neighbor is depicted in such a fashion and with relish listens to this;
- (2) if, due to curiosity, he gives another person the opportunity to gossip;
- (3) if, by smiling, nodding, or by saying, "What are you saying? Is that possible," he stimulates the backbiter to continue in order to either hear more, or because he dares not let the backbiter be the only speaker—especially if he is a person of some prominence;
- (4) if he does not speak but is silent instead and allows the backbiter to proceed rather than opposing him with words and gestures. "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue" (Prov 25:23).

This is the most common sin among all manner of people, which is nevertheless dreadful and devilish. Therefore, in order that everyone may be deterred from this sin the following matters ought to be noted:

- (1) You yourself would not like it if someone would thus gossip

about you, and therefore you ought not to do so concerning others. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt 7:12). There is with God the judgment of retribution, so that if you gossip about someone else, another person will gossip about you. “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged” (Luke 6:37).

(2) You rob your neighbor of that which is most precious. “A good name is better than precious ointment” (Eccles 7:1).

(3) The supreme Lawgiver expressly forbids it. “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people” (Lev 19:16).

(4) It is the peculiar work of the devil, who spoke evil of Job (Job 1:11), and does so of the godly. “For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10). He stirs up to backbiting, for the devil sits upon the tongue of the speaker and in the ear of the hearer.

(5) It is a sin attributed to the most evil of times when man’s conduct would be most abominable. “For men shall be ... false accusers” (2 Tim 3:2-3).

(6) God hates backbiters. “These six things doth the Lord hate: ... a lying tongue ... a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov 6:16-17, 19).

(7) God excludes them from heaven, this being evident by way of reverse argument. “He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Ps 15:3); “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape” (Prov 19:5); “Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son ... I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Ps 50:20-21).

The fourth sin which is forbidden here is *slander*. The distinction between slander and backbiting is this, that the one occurs in the absence of the neighbor (behind his back), and the other in his presence. Since the latter sin is of a more brazen and evil nature, it is thus all the more abominable.

(1) This sin sometimes occurs at a moment of seething wrath. This is what Shimei did toward David (2 Sam 16:7-8). This also occurs when we make a fool out of someone and mockingly accuse him of all sorts of evil—as the children did toward Elisha (2 Kings 2:23-24). It occurs when we make sarcastic remarks, subtle digs, and snide remarks; that is, subtly attribute some evil to someone as having been committed by him, doing so in such manner that the other person has no recourse. One then considers himself to have handled this well, delights in it, and tells others how he fooled the

other person. David refers to that as having a tongue as sharp as a razor (Ps 52:2), sharpening one's tongue as a serpent (Ps 140:3), and as a false tongue, which is as "sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Ps 120:3-4). It also occurs when we make faces, laugh others to scorn, shoot out the lip, and shake the head—as the Jews did toward Christ (cf. Ps 22:7; Matt 27:39). Concerning them Solomon says: "Judgments are prepared for scorers" (Prov 19:29). Paul excludes revilers from heaven (1 Cor 6:10) and he forbids the godly to have fellowship with them (1 Cor 5:11).

The fifth sin is *lying*. To lie is knowingly (or if one could have known) speaking contrary to the truth.

(1) There are lies with harmful intent; that is, to injure a person in regard to either his honor or possessions.

(2) There are lies for the purpose of entertaining others with fabricated stories. "They make the king glad ... with their lies" (Hos 7:3).

(3) There are lies by which we seek to avoid dishonor, harm, or punishment, relative to ourself or our neighbor. We can also seek to gain advantage for ourself or others, be it in business transactions or other cases—as Gehazi did, for which he was stricken with leprosy (2 Kings 5:25). The midwives of Egypt did this. Nevertheless, they were blessed by the Lord, not because they lied, but because they did good toward Israel (Exod 1:19).

(4) There is a speaking of lies out of custom. There are habitual liars who speak evil, or they lie without reason and without premeditation, due to their heart being estranged from the truth. They want to be perceived as a great person who knows much and who has done great things.

In order to be deterred from lying, it ought to be known that:

(1) God frequently forbids lying. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Eph 4:25); "Lie not one to another" (Col 3:9).

(2) It is an abomination before God. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Prov 12:22).

(3) It is the devil's work. "When he (*the devil*) speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44); "I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" (1 Kings 22:22).

(4) Liars readily become known and are despised by everyone.

(5) God punishes them temporally and eternally. Ananias and Sapphira were immediately punished with death because of a lie (Acts 5:2-3). We read furthermore: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing" (Ps 5:6); "All liars, shall have their part in the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the *second* death” (Rev 21:8).

Sixthly, *there is the deceitful use of one’s words or countenance*. Deceiving for profit was discussed in the *eighth* commandment. However, here the act of deceiving will be considered as far as being contrary to the truth, and when words and gestures are not consistent with the heart.

(1) This occurs when we act *hypocritically*. Cain acted hypocritically when he showed friendship to his brother Abel in order to kill him (Gen 4:8). Simeon and Levi acted hypocritically toward Hamor and Shechem (Gen 34:14, 26), and Absalom did so toward his brother Amnon (2 Sam 13:26-29).

(2) This occurs when we praise someone with *flattery* in order to snare and trap him. The Pharisees did this toward Christ (Matt 22:15-17). Observe this in Ps 12:2: “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.” At such a moment they can even express their words in a heartfelt and passionate manner—as if they meant it. The objective and reasoning within their heart are, however, ill-disposed toward that person. To this belongs the excessive praising of someone for the purpose of humiliating him all the more, or to puff up one’s neighbor in order that his foolishness might become manifest.

(3) This occurs when one uses *equivocal language*; that is, language by which one intends to deceive his neighbor by causing him to interpret words differently from what they were secretly intended to mean. This has been discussed when we considered the *third* commandment.

When engaged in such deceitful behavior, several sins coalesce and it is therefore all the more abominable in the eyes of God and of men.

(1) The Lord forbids this sharply. “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour” (Lev 19:13).

(2) Flatterers will become manifest and be put to shame. “He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him” (Prov 27:14).

(3) Flatterers will not avoid their judgment, for the saints pray against them. “The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips” (Ps 12:3).

(4) God pronounces a woe upon hypocrites, doing so seven times in one chapter (Matt 23:14-29). “Woe unto you, hypocrites.”

The Virtues Enjoined

It is not sufficient to abstain from forbidden sins, but also this commandment enjoins the practice of opposite *virtues*.

First, *we are to promote with all our strength the good reputation of our neighbor*. We must render him honor and respect and preserve his reputation as much as the truth will allow us to do. If he has faults, they are to be covered rather than recounted. They should not be denied, for then one would lie; rather, we must be silent about them, and those who recount his faults should be rebuked as being guilty of backbiting. In rebuking such backbiters, one should, however, not justify these faults. Jonathan promoted David's honor in such a fashion, speaking good on his behalf (1 Sam 19:4). "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor 13:4-7).

Secondly, *we are to love the truth*. If the heart is truthful and loves the truth, it will bring forth truth, and man will be prevented from lying—be it that this is either to our advantage or disadvantage, or that the person is either friendly or hostile toward us. "... therefore love the truth and peace" (Zech 8:19).

Thirdly, *we are to speak the truth*, promote the truth, and bear witness to the truth at every occasion—whether this pertains to us or to our neighbor. "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth" (Zech 8:16); "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Eph 4:25); "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil 4:8).

Final Arguments for Observing this Commandment

(1) God is a God of truth (Isa 65:16), God desires truth within (Ps 51:6), and God's eyes are upon the truth (Jer 5:3).

(2) Those who love the truth and speak the truth are esteemed by everyone, are able to be an ornament in the church, and be beneficial to others.

(3) Such always have an unfettered and quiet conscience. They are not afraid of being caught in their words due to distortion of words, backbiting, slander, flattery, and hypocrisy. Even if the one whispers against the other, he is not moved by it; though if he is reproached he remains calm, for his conscience does not gnaw. Even if one rises up against him, he will stand firm, and he will be as bold as a young lion (Prov 28:1).

(4) God will be with such persons and help them, and their light will shine forth as the noonday. Those who, in faith, speak and act to God's honor and according to His law, are the true members of His church and they are the heirs of salvation—for it is an evidence of their grace. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Ps 15:1-3). He who desires to speak and act in such a fashion, and who thus wishes to conduct himself toward his neighbor, ought:

(1) To desist from ambition and lust for money, and renounce all that is of the world—for such a disposition generally engenders the sins against this commandment.

(2) To be on guard, for he carries within his heart the seed of the sin against this commandment. He ought to be cautious in speaking, always remind himself of the omniscience of God, and unite his heart to the fear of God. "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer" (Prov 15:28). David did this: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Ps 39:1).

(3) Continually to pray to God with David: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord" (Ps 19:14); "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps 141:3).

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

The Tenth Commandment

David says: “I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Ps 119:96). All the commandments have broad dimensions, but this is particularly true for the *tenth* commandment. They are broad 1) as far as the objects are concerned, and the branches which come forth out of the stem, 2) as far as the earnestness and zeal with which the task must be accomplished, and 3) as far as the spiritual manner of observance: in love, godly fear, and obedience. An unconverted person takes no note of this, and believes the external observance to be sufficient. Some—with the rich young ruler—allow themselves to believe that they have observed all these things (Matt 19:20). Many of the converted do not focus so much upon this, until they learn that they see but little, and those who begin to perceive this become desirous for more light, and pray, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Ps 119:18). Many indeed hold the law before them as a mirror in order to discern their deformity in it and to govern their lives accordingly. There is, however, but little knowledge concerning the *tenth* commandment and it is generally passed over. It is one of those commandments against which we sin most frequently, and therefore it is essential that this commandment also be explained as far as its correct meaning is concerned. He who correctly observes this will be startled concerning himself, not having known that he has been continually sinning.

Man Created with Desire for God

The Papists and Lutherans make this one commandment into two—something which we have previously refuted. Paul refers to it

with one word in Rom 7:7—*covetousness*. Covetousness, as far as impurity and unrighteousness are concerned, belongs to the *seventh* and *eighth* commandments; however, covetousness is mentioned here without such connotations. Man is not self-sufficient; he cannot satisfy himself with himself. He is but an empty vessel, only capable of receiving something. He must find his fulfillment by matters which are exterior to himself—both according to soul and body. He must have food, drink, air, and light, will it be well with his body. According to the soul, he must have something spiritual and infinite—that is God Himself—in order for his infinite desire to be satisfied.

In order to be fulfilled, God has created an innate desire within Roman Catholic Church, false views of man. This desire, considered in and of itself, was a perfect desire. As long as man was in the state of perfection, that desire was directed toward the right objects in a right manner. In regard to the soul, his desire was only directed toward God in order to be continually satisfied in having fellowship with and finding delight in Him—and as far as the body was concerned, his desire was directed toward that which it needed. It was the food of Christ's soul to do the will of His Father (John 4:34), and according to the body He had a desire for temporal food and drink. He hungered (Matt 4:2), and He thirsted (John 19:28).

However, after man had sinned, desire remained but it has been distorted and corrupted, both as to the manner in which it functions, as well as relative to its objects. He has no desire after God and his desires are therefore not directed toward God as being the satisfaction of his soul. His desire is after this world, whereby he seeks to satisfy his spiritual soul, and according to the body he has unlawful desires toward that which is lawful in and of itself. These desires furthermore extend themselves toward forbidden objects. This is the sin forbidden in this commandment.

Refutation of the Notion that Covetousness is No Sin

Natural man and the Papists are of the opinion that covetousness is no sin if a person's desires are not accompanied by either impurity or unrighteousness; if there is no intent to carry out these desires, there being no deliberation as to the means to use to accomplish this—and thus if his will did not acquiesce in this. There would then only be a desire for a given matter, with the supposition, however, that one desires to attain this by proper means. This would then be no sin.

Proof #1: The *tenth* commandment itself refutes them for the following reasons:

(1) Even though impure desires toward our neighbor's wife and an unlawful desire for our neighbor's possessions belong to the realm of the *seventh* and *eighth* commandments, the law nevertheless explicitly prohibits coveting in *this* commandment.

(2) Since there remains no other coveting of our neighbor's wife, house, or possessions but a coveting which does not translate into the unlawful pursuit of these things—and thus a coveting in which the will does not acquiesce, as the object of our desire is presently still our neighbor's possession and may therefore not be ours—then that very desire is sin.

Proof #2: The apostle states expressly that covetousness is sin. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom 7:7). He knew that covetousness relative to adultery and theft was sinful, for that is evident from nature. He speaks of a covetousness which was concealed from nature, however, and thus also from him, being in the state of nature. He thus speaks of covetousness in an unrestricted sense, unrelated to the acquiescence of the will—a covetousness which he nevertheless was not permitted to have as it pertained to the wife or possessions of his neighbor. He was therefore not permitted to covet, even if it were but a passionate desire, such as: "If only I had that woman or that house." He declares such a desire to be sin. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law."

Proof #3: Covetousness by its very nature brings forth sin. First there is only covetousness, but, once this arises, it draws man further away and entices him. He will then proceed with the commission of sin. However, that which gives birth to sin is sin itself, for a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Observe this in James 1:14-15: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The Sins Prohibited

The sins prohibited in this commandment are the following:

First, the *evil disposition* of soul and body is prohibited, for original sin consists in the absence of the image of God and in the possession of the image of the devil. The soul misses true light, love, life, peace, and holiness—yes, God Himself. Instead, she is in a state of darkness, death, unrest, and pollution. Furthermore, the disposition of the body is evil, as a result of which it has numerous inordinate inclinations and thus stirs up the soul to lust in a variety of manners. This disposition is the fountain of all kinds of sinful motions.

Secondly, *dissatisfaction* with our current circumstances is forbidden, which manifests itself:

(1) in a howling emptiness and a greedy yearning for something which is not possessed;

(2) in a restlessness, fretfulness, and stirring of the heart due to not having that which could satisfy, even though it is not limited to a specific thing—it just wants to have something;

(3) in an active lust and desire for something which appears to be able to delight the heart, reasoning as follows: “If I had the wife or husband which my neighbor has—if I had that house, that garden, that piece of land, that horse, that cow (even if one does not desire this in an inordinate manner)—or if I had a different profession, would practice that trade, held that office, had such an amount of money (even if this does not relate to his neighbor), then I would be happy.” Such a person is thus as a “troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa 57:20).

Thirdly, *disagreeable temper* is forbidden. This manifests itself in an aversion for all that is good, and in the quenching of the motions of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30).

Fourthly, an *untamed heart* is forbidden; that is, to be without restraint, to be as a wild animal, and to be as a *Belial* without a yoke.

Fifthly, one is forbidden to *delight in sin*; that is, in the sin of others, as well as in reflecting upon his own, previously committed sins.

Sixthly, to entertain *vain thoughts* is forbidden. This does not pertain to the reflection upon matters which one intends to carry out (for this pertains to other commandments), but rather to those one does not intend to execute but only thinks about and finds delight in doing so. Someone may imagine himself to be in the position of a mayor, businessman, count, prince, or king, and reflect upon what he would then do. Or he imagines himself to be poor, cast out, etc., and how he would then fare. Yes, even if one does not wish to build such castles in the sky and reflect upon such vain things, it can be that such thoughts arise in his heart contrary to his will.

However, to these do not belong those suggestions and interjections of the devil in which his own heart is not involved. The devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He deviously leads man to such opportunities and objects which he knows are suitable to ignite a specific inclination in him. He is like a peddler who asks: “Do you not wish to do this? Do you not have a desire for this? This is beautiful and delightful.” As long as one does not listen to this, or inclines himself in any way, but chases such suggestions away as flies from his countenance, it is not his sin, but the devil’s. Such temptations are not a man’s thoughts, but

rather the devil speaking to a man. If, however, inclinations begin to stir within the heart and one begins to listen, then he is guilty, even though the initial cause may have proceeded from the devil. I say, “may have proceeded,” for man’s heart itself continually generates all manner of vanity and sinful lusts, and it is thus necessary to distinguish whether the initiative came from the devil or from one’s self. For as soon as there is the least inclination of the heart, there is sin. It is also difficult to discern this, but he who is very watchful over his own heart and who has made some advancement in spiritual life, will know better whether the initial impulse proceeds from the heart, or whether it comes or is suggested by an external source—and what it is that will either take hold or not take hold.

The interjections, buffetings, and fiery darts of the devil are more easily discerned, since they are entirely contrary to the nature of man. Such is true for blasphemous thoughts toward God. I call them thoughts—not that they are thoughts, but those who are assaulted are of the opinion that they are their own thoughts. They become extremely distraught over this and conclude that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. They cannot pray, but think that they will be damned. This even adversely affects their mental faculties and exhausts the body. That such thoughts are not man’s own, but are only a hearing of the revilings of Satan is evident for the following reasons:

(1) They arise in a frightful manner, for we are somewhat favorably inclined toward that which proceeds from the heart, giving such thoughts either full reign or being naturally inclined to reflect upon them. The thoughts interjected by Satan, however, are resisted due to the absurdity and abominableness of the matter, since they are contrary to the natural conscience, or they are resisted by the grace, fear, and love of God.

(2) They are recognized by the fact that they come from without, and thought after thought is forcefully impressed, contrary to all opposition. This is similar to a person putting his fingers in his ears in order not to hear what the other person is saying. The other person calls out so loudly, however, and comes so close that he nevertheless hears it. Everyone will then perceive that it is not the sin of the hearer, but of the one who speaks evil. Such is also the case here. Therefore, the one who is assaulted must note this as a trial from God (who gives the devil free reign) as a sorrowful cross, and not as his sin. This consideration will strengthen him and enable him to endure these onslaughts all the better. All he needs to do is flee the temptation and divert himself with some serious

physical activity. He must especially not concern himself with it, but rather despise it as an abomination of the devil, who will for this reason be punished. Such a person cannot repel this, but it will strengthen him to give no heed thereto, and it will thus be less injurious. And if he receives some breathing room, he must earnestly pray to the Lord—yes, during these assaults he must cry with his heart to God. He will have that much more liberty to do so if he takes note that it is not his sin, but rather that he is being tormented with these thoughts.

The Virtues Enjoined

The virtues which are enjoined in this commandment are the following:

First, *we must be adorned with the image of God*. We must have that pure light and knowledge of God, and there must be holiness and righteousness relative to the will and affections. This blameless spiritual disposition is suitable to engender all manner of spiritual motions and exercises. Furthermore, there must be a blameless and proper disposition of heart and moderation of the body, having nothing but orderly motions.

Secondly, *we are to be satisfied with having union and communion with God*, as well as with the will of God, if we do not have that which the well-being of soul and body seem to require. “Be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). We must also joyously embrace the will of God in that which we must undertake, and we must accomplish it out of love. To be satisfied while missing what we would desire to have does not preclude our being sensitive about this, nor the use of means to obtain that for which we have a holy desire. It does preclude emotional upheaval and torment, however, and consists in being quiet, calm, and content—this being the will of our Father and to our advantage.

Thirdly, there must be a *hatred against sin*. “I hate vain thoughts” (Ps 119:113), and a heartfelt love for that which is good. “... but Thy law do I love.”

Fourthly, in our heart, thoughts, words, and deeds we must *hold forth the law of God*, as the will of God—as our only rule of life. “I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end” (Ps 119:30, 111-112).

Behold, here is a mirror in which you may see your sins, and here is a rule according to which you may direct your ways. May the Lord send forth His light and truth, and may they lead us! *Amen*.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

The Glorification of God

There are no virtues which are not comprehended in the perfect rule of life, the law of God. We have pointed out the most prominent aspects of each commandment in the previous chapters. We shall now consider some of these matters more explicitly, and thus stir up the soul that delights in holiness to practice it.

Virtue: Its Nature and Goal

Virtue is that within man which perfectly harmonizes with the will of God as presented in the law.

One may consider virtues in their propensity or in their manifestation. The propensity is the virtuous disposition which God has infused at regeneration and is acquired by way of many exercises. Due to this propensity the virtuous person is active in a holy fashion toward various objects.

He who has one virtue has them all. This is true not only because they are all united—for one virtue does not exist independently, and in the exercise of one virtue many merge together—but also because the disposition of the heart is virtuous and capable of being exercised in harmony with the requirement of the object. The holier this disposition is, the holier the ensuing deeds will be. By reason of the exercise of the one virtue, this holy disposition is increased and thus becomes more competent to exercise other virtues.

The one virtue (when considered as such) is not superior to another virtue, for they are in perfect harmony with the law under all circumstances. Any conformity to the law less than that is a fault, and therefore sin. However, the objects and circumstances are either greater or less, and in that respect the manifestation of the one virtue is greater than of the other. Furthermore, since man is

imperfect, one man has more of this virtuous disposition and its actual manifestation than the other.

In regard to the ultimate goal of a virtue, the consideration of the virtue precedes its manifestation. The more that man is illuminated, the more he will focus on loftier matters, setting them before him in order to attain them. A beginning Christian perceives the dreadfulfulness of eternal condemnation and has confused notions about salvation. This causes him to aim at being delivered from the one and to acquire the other. As such a person is increasingly illuminated, he will focus upon loftier matters and will strive to acquire them. He will do so until he is acquainted with and delights in the highest goal: the glorification of God. Being motivated by this, he uses all means at his disposal to attain to this. A younger Christian, having lesser matters in view, nevertheless ends in the glorification of God, giving thanks for the good that was received. The more mature a Christian becomes, however, the more he will engage himself from the superior to the inferior; that is, love for the glory of God motivates him to do everything which serves to that end. This ultimate goal, *the glorification of God*, we posit as the primary virtue.

God Glorifies Himself in the Works of Nature and Grace

God *first* of all glorifies Himself when He reveals His perfections to His creatures—both in the works of nature as well as in the works of grace.

(1) God glorifies Himself in the *works of nature*, that is, in creation and preservation. Consider the following passages: “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! When I consider Thy heavens ...” (Ps 8:1); “In wisdom hast thou made them all” (Ps 104:24); “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20); “Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good ... from heaven” (Acts 14:17).

(2) God glorifies Himself in the *work of grace*, by manifesting therein His righteousness: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness” (Rom 3:25); His wisdom: “To the intent that now ... might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10); His mercy and grace: “To the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph 1:6); His love: “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared” (Titus 3:4). And thus “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa 6:3).

Secondly, God glorifies His Son, the Mediator Jesus Christ: “The

God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus” (Acts 3:13), and the Son in turn glorifies the Father: “I have glorified Thee on the earth” (John 17:4).

Thirdly, God glorifies His children in this life when He adorns them with His image and exalts them before the eyes of the world. “Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable” (Isa 43:4); “And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek 16:14). God glorifies them after death: “For it became Him ... in bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10); “Moreover ... whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

The Lord has all honor and glory infinitely within Himself—also when there was no creature to acknowledge this. He is “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2), the “King of glory” (Ps 24:8), and “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17). From this glory emanates a brilliance which even the angels cannot endure. Therefore they cover their faces and cry out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts” (Isa 6:5). When surrounded by this brilliance, man disappears and cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa 6:5). The glory of God can neither be decreased nor increased by a creature. His glory remains the same, irrespective of whether man despises or magnifies it. It is pure goodness of God—who is light, and who covers Himself with light as with a garment and dwells in an unapproachable light—that He reveals His glory to men in some measure, permitting them to rejoice in this, to glorify, acknowledge, magnify, and praise Him, and to make Him known to others as such. This is felicity and the work of angels. “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:14). This is felicity and the work of glorified souls. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Rev 4:11). This is felicity and the work of believers upon earth who have been formed to the praise of His glorious grace and to show forth His praise (Isa 43:21). Every godly person delights in this activity as David did. “I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works” (Ps 145:5).

The Glorification of God

To glorify God is to acknowledge Him, praise Him, and to make Him known unto others with love, joy, and reverence, in response to beholding His perfections.

The glorification of God *flows forth from beholding His perfections*. The knowledge of God is in consequence of faith or as a result of

beholding. The apostle distinguishes between these two in 2 Cor 5:7.

Faith acknowledges God to be as He has revealed Himself in His Word. In the Word of God the perfections of God are described as they manifest themselves in the works of nature, and particularly as they shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ—that is, in the great work of redemption. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Faith takes notice of all that the Word expresses about God, and particularly as He made Himself known to Moses. “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exod 34:6). Faith establishes these as certain truths and acknowledges God to be thus. Such faith causes man to conduct himself toward such a God as He is worthy of and is appropriate for him. Yes, to believe is to glorify God. “He (Abraham) ... was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20). Even if a believer had nothing beyond faith that God is such a God in Christ and such a God for him, and did not perceive the sensible manifestation of this within himself, he must proceed on that basis, rejoice, and in love and joy acknowledge, magnify, and praise Him as such. This is the error of many gracious souls—they do neither sufficiently esteem the view of faith, nor accustom themselves to glorify God thereby.

Even though the Lord has reserved this immediate beholding for heaven, He nevertheless grants His children some measure of this according to His promise. “I ... will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

Although all believers are not placed with Moses in the cleft of the rock when the Lord proclaimed His Name, are not all taken along to the mountain where Jesus was glorified, and are not all drawn to the *third* heaven with Paul, the Lord occasionally gives His children a superior view of Himself by faith and a clearer view of His perfections. Faith, and this clear view of God, is the fountain from which the glorification of God proceeds.

This view of God begets love to the glory of His Name. He who beholds the perfections of God will immediately be ignited in love—not only to be personally united with the Beloved One, but to exalt and praise all the attributes of God, and also to make them known to others, so that the Lord may be glorified by many. “Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified” (Ps 70:4). Out of this knowledge and love issues forth joy, and a delightful acquiescence that God is such a glorious and blessed God. “The humble shall see this, and be glad” (Ps 69:32); “Rejoice

in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness” (Ps 97:12).

Such a person having been rendered capable through knowledge, love, and joy, makes the glory of God his ultimate objective. Motivated by love, he does whatever he can to promote that objective, relates everything to that objective, and ends in that from which his activity originated. Many psalms begin and end with *hallelujah*. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever” (Rom 11:36). This is the command: “Do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31); “... that God in all things may be glorified” (1 Pet 4:11).

The Manner in Which God is Glorified

Having a delight in this objective, and making this their goal in all things, the godly endeavor to glorify God personally and together with others. They personally glorify God with the heart, tongue, and deeds.

First of all, they glorify Him *with the heart*.

(1) They do so when they observe God in all His works, occupying themselves in the beholding of the perfections of God which manifest themselves in these works. “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord” (Ps 107:43); “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee” (Ps 139:17-18); “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:34).

(2) They do so when between God and their soul they in adoration lose themselves in the glories of God and acquiescently exclaim, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Ps 145:3); “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Ps 139:6).

(3) They do so when, with holy motions within, they exalt the Lord above everything and praise His Name in solitude. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Pet 3:15).

Secondly, they glorify Him *with the tongue*. The heart, being filled with holy meditation, sets everything in motion. Not being able to refrain themselves, they express themselves in solitude as David did: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Ps 103:1); “But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof” (Ps 71:14-15). The soul, forgetting herself in

the beholding of the perfections of God, breaks forth in jubilation, and the high praises of God will be in her mouth (Ps 149:6). Such reflections cause the “lips of those that are asleep to speak” (Song 7:9), and give “songs in the night” (Job 35:10). “Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me” (Ps 42:8); “... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16).

Thirdly, they glorify Him *with deeds*. They do so,

(1) when, with the objective to render God honor and glory, they humble themselves before the Lord as a sinner and as one worthy of condemnation, and flee to Him for grace, thus rendering Him honor for His mercy;

(2) when they request all that they desire from the Lord, thus acknowledging Him as the origin and giver of all good things;

(3) when they humbly bow before Him to honor Him in His adorable majesty;

(4) when they, motivated by the fear of God, subdue a stirring sin, thus rendering Him honor for His holiness and stupendous majesty;

(5) when they take refuge to Him for protection and without fear hide in Him, thus glorifying Him in His omnipotence and faithfulness;

(6) when they make themselves available to God for service, saying, “Oh Lord, surely I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant,” thus rendering Him honor for His sovereign dominion and His worthiness to be served;

(7) when they, in all manner of crosses, silently subject themselves to Him, thus rendering Him honor for His wisdom and compassion. They do so in all circumstances and exercises, thereby rendering Him honor for those attributes which manifest themselves at such occasions. If you engage in these and other activities, the glorification of God is indeed implied in this—even though you are then most sensitive to your own salvation. You must, however, strive for loftier objectives and accustom yourself to magnify God in response to lively views of Him, and thus begin and end everything with the glory of God.

We glorify God relative to others with words and deeds. We first of all do so with *words* if we—having as our objective to make the glory of God known to others so that they also may glorify that God who is worthy of all honor—instruct others in the way of salvation, and in various ways lead them to the Lord Jesus, stirring them up to faith and repentance, and by admonishing and rebuking them.

We also glorify God if we speak of Him and His deeds to others

in order to show them the glory of God in all His works. “O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works” (Ps 105:1-2); “... declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted” (Isa 12:4).

Secondly, we do so with *deeds* and our entire life if we, having as our objective the glorification of God, conduct ourselves in such a fashion in the presence of people that the image of God shines forth. God is invisible and the natural man neither knows nor sees God in either the works of nature or the works of grace. If, however, a child of God who is a partaker of the image of God manifests this image in his conduct, the heart of an unconverted person will frequently be powerfully convicted that there is a God—and that He is to be honored, feared, loved, and served. It is a means whereby some begin to seek the way of salvation and are converted. A regenerate person, seeing the image of God shine forth in another, is stirred up in the love and fear of God, and some who are in a backslidden state thereby come to repentance and are restored to their former zeal. And even if our conduct does not have this effect, we nevertheless glorify the Lord as far as we ourselves are concerned; that is, if the intent is there to show by our conduct that God is such a God. As a reward, one will carry a sweet peace of conscience homeward. This is the command of the Lord Jesus: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:16); “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8). The apostle Peter desires that women would thus endeavor to win their husbands: “... that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives” (1 Pet 3:1).

Man’s Grievous Failure to Glorify God

The manner in which one glorifies God is evident from the foregoing. He who loves God and finds delight in honoring Him and in the glorification of His Name will experience much grief when he observes the conduct of men in this respect.

First, let your eyes scan the entire earth for a moment. Observe how, on the one hand, God does not leave Himself without witness in that He does good—gives rain and fruitful seasons from heaven, and fills the hearts of men with food and gladness. Observe how God in His works manifests His eternal power and Godhead, His glory and awesome majesty, and His longsuffering and mercy. Over against this, observe the conduct of men. The

hearts of all men (with a few exceptions) are turned away from the Lord. They forget Him and neither acknowledge, thank, nor glorify Him. They act as if God does not exist, is not indeed glorious and worthy of all honor, and as if all that they are and receive does not proceed from Him. They are all as the swine who, with their faces downward, gather the acorns, but who do not look up toward the tree from which they fall. Such is also the case with man. Man eagerly accepts all good things but does not look up to the Lord who gives them—yes, even abuses them against Him. A lover of God's honor, attentively observing this, finds reason to sorrow and mourn. Ought not the high, exalted, and glorious God be honored for all His benevolence? Oh corrupt, crooked, and perverse generation! In focusing upon man he will grieve over his misery—that he does not answer to the purpose for which he was created, is void of that felicity, and thus becomes and remains subject to the wrath of God.

Secondly, you who are lovers of God's honor, consider the church for a moment. Is not that a people who should glorify God, who have been formed for that purpose, and who should be the glory of Christ? How sad is the condition of the church in regard to this! A great number—the exception being the godly who by the extraordinary goodness of God are still present there—are void of knowledge, void of love, void of the fear of God, void of a desire to approach unto God, void of the appearance of godliness, and void of a striving to render God honor. Men are generally worldly, live according to their lusts, and hate that which is good and those who do good; some are worse in their conduct than other sects—yes, more than the heathen. For their sake the name of God is blasphemed. Seek solitude and mourn over this; let tears quietly drip from your eyes, call them *Ichabod*, and complain, “How has the faithful city become a harlot, and how has the crown fallen from her head!”

(1) There are those who openly serve the world and who mock with godliness and the godly. There are drunkards, gamblers, dancers, show-offs, backbiters, liars, rancorous individuals, and men of evil temper—in one word, all manner of ungodly men. It would be one thing if these people were outside the realm of the church; however, they are to be found within her, and thus they rob the church of her glory and dishonor God and Christ, the Head of the church.

(2) Others attend the public worship services; they join in singing the praises of God, arise or bow down during prayer; both write and say, “Praise and thanks be unto God,” speak of God and

His Word, and yet manifest by their deeds that it is merely routine, custom, and the work of the mouth and not from the heart. In this they follow hypocritical Israel, of whom we read in Ps 78:36-37, “Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant.” God speaks against such. “Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder” (Isa 29:13-14).

(3) Others are of the opinion that they perceive, love, and magnify the glory of God in an exceptional manner when they consider creation with amazement and delight, even though they do not get beyond creation. This occurs when they are in ecstasy about the elegant features of the heavens (be it in the evening, at night, or in the morning), when they rejoice in a beautiful forest or meadow, or when they attentively observe the formation of animals and vegetation, and show this to others. Their verbal reference to the Creator when speaking of this—while they neither observe Him in that work, rejoice in His attributes which manifest themselves in that work, nor lovingly praise Him—does not qualify as the glorification of God, but rather as the adoration of the creature. In such a case they do not point others to the Creator, but frequently to themselves as being so wise in searching this out and finding such delight in glorifying God. However, the adoration of the glory of God in the works of nature is something entirely different from this and cannot be explained by the natural man.

(4) Others go beyond this and yet do not glorify God. There are those who make the Word of God the object of their study, search out its mysteries, find delight in acquiring knowledge about a mystery, and are amazed about the wisdom of its structure—that is, about the fulfillment of the prophecies, the wondrous matters which still must come to pass, yes, even about heavenly matters. Such are of the opinion that they are doing a holy work and are thereby glorifying God. Furthermore, the result of this is that sins which the world commits, and which they also have committed previously, have no effect upon them. They are so earnestly involved in acquiring knowledge of biblical matters, that this earnest endeavor engages all their affections and occupies all their time. Since they now find satisfaction in this knowledge, they have no need of being entertained by other things. Furthermore, external

knowledge results in external purification. “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ...” (2 Pet 2:20). All of this does not constitute a glorifying of God, but is a case of not getting any further than the external. 1 Cor 13:2 speaks of this: “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Temporal believers, who receive the Word with joy (Luke 8:13), can attain to this. Of such Paul says: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ...” (Heb 6:4-5). Balaam spoke of himself in this manner: “The man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open” (Num 24:15-16). Let no one therefore be satisfied with these things, being of the opinion that he glorifies God, lest he be deceived at the end. Instead, we must endeavor in all things to behold God as our God in Christ, be kindled with love toward Him, and praise God by virtue of such a disposition. This is what constitutes glorifying God.

The Serious Consequences of Not Glorifying God

Therefore, you who desecrate the Lord’s Name and do not glorify the Lord, give heed! The purpose for which you were created and the reason that the Lord has bestowed so many temporal and spiritual blessings upon you is to glorify God. Even though this may not appear to be a sin to you, and you lightly step over it, it is nevertheless a fierce evil and makes you subject to the dreadful wrath of God. Pay careful attention to what I shall briefly say to you, and may it cause you to repent.

First, it is a truth known to all *that whatever does not meet the objective of its existence is good for nothing*. You have been created to glorify your Creator. All the blessings which God has bestowed upon you obligate you to this. You are, however, ignorant of that purpose; you do not love it, do not strive for it, and do not engage yourself in it. Rather, you dishonor Him and show contempt for Him in all that you do. What is even worse, you furthermore embolden yourself to intermingle with His people, sit with them at the Lord’s table, and profess to be one of God’s children. With that reputation, you live an ungodly and worldly life and thus cause the

name of the Lord to be blasphemed (Rom 2:24). You thus observe that you do not meet the objective of your existence and ought to be cast away as an unworthy one. Take notice that the following is said to you: “If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6). To abide in Christ is to remain united to Him by faith and to bring forth holy fruits by virtue of that union, in which the Father is glorified (vs. 8). This, however, is not true for you, and you will therefore be cast out with contempt and be burned.

Secondly, you have brought yourself into a situation—this being true as long as you remain this way—which does not permit you to engage yourself in those activities by which God is glorified by His own. You were not willing to do it, and now you will also not do it; God does not even want you to glorify Him in such a manner. Observe this in Ps 50:15-16: “And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth?”

Thirdly, since you do not honor God, but despise Him, God will also despise you and make you contemptible. You envision glory and honor, but God will cover you with shame. “Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam 2:30). This will come upon you; the Lord says it and He will also do it. Apply to yourself what is written in Mal 2:9: “Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways.” When you die, you will leave a stench behind, you will have the burial of a donkey, and you “shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa 66:24). And when you will arise at the resurrection, you “shall awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). This will be the end for all who did not glorify God in this life.

Fourthly, since you do not glorify God, He will give you over to the commission of all manner of sin—particularly the dishonoring of your own body by filthy lusts. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, ...wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (Rom 1:21, 24).

Fifthly, let me bring this to a single conclusion: God will glorify Himself in you by manifesting His righteousness and by punishing you in an extraordinary manner. What a dreadful condition it is to be the object of God’s wrath! It will be such that men and angels will see it and with approval will acquiesce therein, saying, “Even

so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (Rev 16:7). When *Nadab and Abihud* did not glorify God, God consumed them with fire from heaven, and it is stated in addition to this, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Lev 10:3). Of Pharaoh we read in Rom 9:17, “For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My Name might be declared throughout all the earth.” If God glorifies Himself by punishing those who do not glorify Him, then He does not wish that we lament for them. Instead He says, “Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord” (Amos 6:10). On the contrary, it is God’s will that we would rejoice and glorify the Lord when He executes His righteous vengeance. “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Ps 58:10-11). Hear this, despisers of God, and tremble, for your judgments are approaching. Repent and flee from the wrath to come.

The Shortcomings of God’s Children in Glorifying God

Lovers of God’s honor, consider also for a moment the precious daughters of Zion. Rejoice indeed if you perceive in them that secret yearning, weeping, waiting, praying, rejoicing over comforting experiences, thanking for received blessings, and a willingness to live a life pleasing unto God and to fully surrender to the service of God. However, what weak and feeble children they generally are! How little beholding there is of God! How little determination there is to glorify God personally as well as in the presence of others! How readily this objective disappears from our thoughts! How little zeal, earnestness, perseverance, and display there is in this respect! How frequently they are faint-hearted! How much weakness and sinfulness manifests itself in their walk! Oh, if only the godly would walk as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and that one could see that the love of God possesses their hearts, that the fear of God is before their eyes, and that they are adorned with the image of Christ! Then one would be able to observe that they have died to self, their own honor, the love of others, advantages, conveniences, and the fear of man. Then it would be observed that they exist not only for the honor of God, but that God’s honor is their objective in all things, and is maintained as the goal of all their deeds. “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!” (Lam 4:1). Therefore

lament and mourn that God is glorified so little, even by His own children, and let this grieve you in your heart.

Exhortation to Glorify God

However, you yourself ought to especially endeavor in the future to glorify God while you are still here. It should not be sufficient for you to hate and flee sin, live a godly life and do godly deeds in which the glorification of God is implied. Rather, elevate your heart to a higher level of godliness, which consists in having the glory of God as your objective in your entire conduct. Focus continually upon this goal so that by continual exercise you may attain to a habitual tendency in this respect. I will endeavor to stir you up to that end, and you must also endeavor to be stirred up by this.

First, let God's requirement and continual exhortations penetrate your heart. Consider attentively these few texts selected out of many. "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:20); "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). I do not hold these texts before you to teach and confirm an unknown truth to you, but by means of my pen to deeply impress this matter upon you and to incite you to engage in this with an obedient heart, knowing that this is not a peripheral activity, but that you ought not to do anything else but this. Have you yourself not determined to obey the Lord and have you not frequently asked Him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This then is His answer to you: "Glorify Me; let that be your objective in all things. Let that be the principle motivating you to engage yourself, and let that be the goal where you end and in which you rest." Therefore do so at this very moment and begin at once, lest you prove to be an insincere inquirer.

Secondly, on this occasion I will hold before you the example of the Lord Jesus and His saints. Examples are highly effective in motivating others. Do not harden your heart, but become pliable and willing to imitate them. You love the Lord Jesus, do you not? Love strives for conformity. Your Jesus has left you an example in order that you would follow in His footsteps. And is it not your personal prayer, "Draw me, and I shall run after Thee"? It was, however, Jesus' objective in all that He did to glorify His Father. "... that Thy Son also may glorify Thee ... I have glorified Thee on the earth" (John 17:1, 4). Thus, join yourself to Jesus, learn this from Him, and follow Him in all that you do.

Whose heart would not become desirous for the glorification of God when discerning with what measure of love and burning zeal the saints have been engaged in, having exhorted everyone to do

likewise? Hold before you the example of David and hear him speak thus: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name” (Ps 103:1); “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:33-34); “But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only” (Ps 71:14-16). He knew indeed that in and of himself he was not able to attain to such a lofty and glorious work, and therefore he prayed that he would be permitted and enabled to do this. “Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day” (Ps 71:8). He could not fully satisfy himself with praising the Lord and he is not content to say but once or twice, “Praise the Lord,” but in Ps 136 he exclaims twenty-six times, “For His mercy endureth forever.” In various psalms he begins and ends with “Hallelujah, praise the Lord.” Yes, perceiving the infinity of the glory of the Lord, and that he was too insignificant to magnify this glory commensurate with his desire, he therefore summons the angels, men, and all things to assist him, and ends as follows: “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord” (Ps 150:6). Therefore join him in this and also cry out, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:13).

Thirdly, consider for a moment from whom your life, breath, and whatever you possess proceed—the air which you breathe; the sun, moon, and stars which illuminate and delight you; the heavens which cover you; the earth on which you walk; the food and drink you partake of; and the animals which you use. Does all this proceed from you? Are you worthy of them? Is not all this the Lord’s? Is it not He who, each day again, grants you His goodness in spite of your unworthiness and sinfulness? Yes, children of God, is it not the Lord who has granted you that precious Savior, who grants you the Holy Spirit, who graces you with spiritual light and life, and who has prepared eternal glory for you? Everything will return from whence it proceeded. Therefore let your heart, while conscious of your insignificance and reflecting upon the inestimable value of the blessings and goodness of the Lord, also bring all this to Him, and with a heart filled with love and adoration cry out, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36).

Fourthly, consider the purpose for which God has placed you upon the earth. Is it only to labor and to rest, to eat and to drink, and to return again to nothing after many troubles and activities? *Dic, cur hic? Tell me, why are you here?* Is it to know, acknowledge, and glorify your Maker? And, children of God, to what end has He regenerated you and placed you in His church? Did He do so without purpose? Is it merely to lead you by that way to heaven? No, but it is that you would glorify Him upon earth. Observe this in the following passages: “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise” (Isa 43:21); “... that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isa 61:3); “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9). You would not have been born, you would not live, and you would not receive and have what you enjoy, if this were not the purpose. If this is the purpose, what else is there to do for you but this? God has, to some degree, been pleased to place His interests and honor into your hand, and has appointed you to be the heralds of His Name. Ought you then not to see to it how you preserve this precious gift entrusted to you, and how you answer to God’s purpose and engage in this inestimable activity? Well, arise therefore, and engage in it with delight.

Fifthly, God is worthy of it, and it is His due that both you and all that exists glorify Him, even if neither salvation, sweetness, nor advantage were to be gained from this. He is worthy of being glorified even if we had not been created for that purpose; even if it were our choice to do or abstain from something without sinning. He is worthy of being glorified even if we were not obligated to do so in light of many benefits received. If but a small ray of the Lord’s glory were to irradiate the soul, one would say, “It suffices me that God is God, and that He alone is worthy of all things. I choose to magnify Him, and desire that this be my only work both in this life and to all eternity.” God is worthy to be eternally glorified, even if there were no creature in heaven or upon earth. As soon as a creature exists, however, the Lord obligates this creature to glorify Him for the sole reason that He is God. This reason cannot motivate man unless God reveals Himself to him and causes him to see and experience the power and glory of the Godhead. The faint light of nature and the clarity of Scripture may convince an unconverted person of his duty, and in a natural way he may initiate something. If, however, the light of grace, unveiling the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ,

irradiates the believing soul, she will truly engage herself in rendering God honor and glory. She may do so when being ashamed before His holiness, while sinking away before His majesty, revering and trembling before His grandeur, adoring His incomprehensible infinity, being filled with love due to His preciousness, or rejoicing in His goodness, and so forth—all according to the manner in which the Lord reveals Himself to the soul. Then, if man had a thousand bodies and a thousand souls, he would willingly surrender them to be spent in the glorification of God. He would consider them all too insignificant to be permitted or be able to proclaim the praises of the Lord, and he would consider it a sufficient reward to be consumed in doing so. Then, yes, then one will rejoice that everything is subject to the Lord and that everything stands ready when He but speaks. It is the delight of such a person to think that all angels and the souls of the perfectly righteous in heaven and all the children of God upon earth have their eyes focused upon Him, expecting all salvation from Him, loving Him, rejoicing in Him, reverently bowing before Him, joyfully jubilating the honor of the glory of His majesty, and infinitely exalting Him above all praise. They consider themselves as being unworthy of seeing, thinking, or speaking anything concerning the Lord, it being an inexpressible grace that a creature be permitted to do so. Is not this able to lift up your heart and to exclaim with them, “Lord! Thou art worthy to receive glory and power”? Therefore, ready soul, render the Lord honor, because He is worthy of it.

The Spiritual Advantages of Glorifying God

Sixthly, since the Lord wishes to stir us up by that which is to our advantage, we must therefore let ourselves be stirred up by this. Consider therefore the advantage afforded to a soul which glorifies God.

(1) It is a great honor to be a means whereby God is glorified, for it is the greatest, most holy, and most exalted task. Of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel it is said to their honor, “Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name” (Ps 99:6). It is the work of angels, for they cry out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa 6:3). They shouted for joy when God formed the earth (Job 38:7), and they sang upon the birthday of Christ: “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:14). The saints in heaven are engaged in this and this will be the eternal occupation of the elect (Rev 4:11).

(2) It affords the soul great joy. The glorification of God is not

such a heavy, grievous, melancholy, or detrimental task, so that many incentives need to be used to pressure someone to engage in this—for it is man’s felicity. Felicity is to find delight and joy in the Lord’s perfections, to love them, and to magnify the Lord in them. They who are as yet unacquainted with this remain unacquainted with their highest felicity. How David delighted himself in this and how delightful did he hold this out to be! “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night, for Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O Lord, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep” (Ps 92:1-2, 4-5); “Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely” (Ps 147:1).

(3) It is pleasing to God. He is delighted when His children glorify Him, deem it to be their delight, joy, and felicity, and do so as much as they are able. “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Ps 22:3); “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs” (Ps 69:30-31). This is as a burnt offering. “The humble shall see this, and be glad” (vs. 32).

(4) The Lord rewards them abundantly. “Them that honour me I will honour” (1 Sam 2:30). While Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, the doors of the prison were opened and the bands of all the prisoners were loosened (Acts 16:25-26). If someone promotes God’s honor, God will also care for his honor. If someone renders glory to God among men, God will also cause him to find honor, love, and favor among men. If someone is for God, God will also be for him. “Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Ps 91:14-16).

(5) If God’s honor is our objective in all things, all our endeavors will be performed in a more pure and holy fashion. The goal stimulates the laborer, dictates the means to him, and makes even heavy labor light. If we love God’s honor, we shall deny our own. We shall follow a straight pathway to that goal and will not be concerned about what is either to our advantage or disadvantage. We shall overcome all opposition and step over all obstacles. We shall have rest after the task has been accomplished, for our

objective was pure and the means were in harmony with God's precepts. We shall not fear the light, but shall desire to be seen and examined, "that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21).

(6) It is a means to the conversion of the unconverted and it quickens the godly to magnify God.

Behold, there you have the benefits which are comprehended in that holy and glorious work. Therefore, you whose soul indeed delights to do this, considering them blessed who practice this, engage yourself to do so. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee" (Ps 84:4).

Exhortation to Persevere in Endeavoring to Glorify God

Objection: Some of the godly who read or hear this will look up against this as a matter too high for them. Others will be grieved, perceiving on the one hand the gloriousness and preciousness of this matter, and on the other hand, how far they come short, and how impossible it is to come to such a state. Others will excuse themselves, either to aggravate their misery or to quietly excuse themselves, pacifying their conscience somewhat in not striving for this. They reason as follows: I do not behold the glory of God; I do not perceive any sweetness or efficacy in this. If I make a start, it is but the work of my mind and I do it more rationally than with a loving heart. I am too sinful; sins overwhelm me and hold me captive. I am therefore all too happy that I may flee to Jesus time and again to make use of Him unto justification, and thus resolve afresh to guard against sin. I cannot determine what my spiritual state is and I do not know whether I have been regenerated and am a child of God. I am so entangled in the care of earthly things that I generally cannot perceive any stirrings in my heart. I am so overwhelmed by my cross—one calamity following another—that I always remain down so that it is even difficult to observe my devotional time. When I do observe it I perceive myself to be confused, listless, and discouraged. How would I then be capable of such a lofty work—to initiate everything from a view of and out of love toward the glorification of God, and to end in this?

Answer (1) Your state is at once to be pitied as it is subject to rebuke. See to it that you do not flatter yourself, for it will not excuse you to have neglected this great work. You were created to that end, the Lord has blessed you to that end, and He has begun His work of grace in you to that end.

(2) The Lord has children of various ages and sizes, but they nevertheless have the same Spirit and the same spiritual life. That

life also functions identically in all, although not to the same degree. The least of them has some knowledge of the Lord, and not only knows that it is his duty to glorify the Lord, but already has a desire for and an inclination toward this. He already glorifies God by the fact that the world knows him not to be one of them, but that, as they say to their own condemnation, he has become one of those strict ones. They also manifest to some degree that the Spirit of Christ is in them and their good works begin to manifest themselves, even if this is as yet in a very small measure. And even if the little ones are as yet not capable of being motivated to undertake something out of love and with that end in view, they nevertheless end in the glorification of God—thanking Him if they have received something from the Lord and grieving if they have done anything whereby godliness, the godly, and thus also God are dishonored.

(3) Therefore, follow the inclination lying at the bottom of the heart: to glorify God. Begin by making this more and more your objective. Remain within the sphere of your spiritual strength; that is, let a child be a child, a young man a young man, and a father a father, being satisfied with the measure of grace which you presently have, while having a strong desire and striving to attain to a higher degree of such grace in the future. The obstacles mentioned frequently spring forth from neglect to glorify God and are removed by diligent endeavor. Therefore do not wait until these difficulties are removed, for then you will never initiate it. Rather, engage in this task as much as you are able, along with all the shortcomings which manifest themselves contrary to your wishes. Do not desist if you fall, but arise again and strive increasingly to break through, and the Lord will help, for “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29).

(4) Do not cease to pray that you also may be granted the privilege to glorify God, and that you may receive the ability to do so. Look to others who have made more progress than you have; fellowship with them and learn from them. Accustom yourself to have that objective always in view—however far you may be astray from your objective—and you will experience that you will increase in this; and as you increase in this, you will increase in all things. May the Lord send forth His light and truth to you, that they may lead you. Amen.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Love Toward God

The contents of the law is *love*, and it is therefore expressed with one word in Rom 13:9-10: “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Love in essence has no other object than that which is most eminent, most cherishable, most satisfying, and unchangeable—which is *God Himself*. This love engenders love toward whatever God wills us to love—and thus toward *our neighbor*. Prior to the fall, Adam knew and was united to God in an immediate sense, and he also loved God in an immediate sense. However, after the fall man lives in enmity toward God and does not love Him. When God grants His children the privilege to be permitted and able to love Him again, then such occurs by reason of the mediation of a Mediator who has removed the enmity and who restores the elect again into friendship with God. This friendship is exercised by faith, by which the regenerate person, receiving the merits of Christ as a ransom, finds peace with God, enjoys the love of God toward him, and in having fellowship with God increasingly loves Him. Faith thus stirs up love and makes it active. In this respect “faith ... worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). This is what distinguishes the love of believers from the love which Adam had. All love which is divorced from and functions apart from faith is no true love. Natural men may write and speak of love, but it is only the work of blind men. They may refer to God as “dear Lord” and imagine that they love God, but they deceive themselves—they do not love God. They may judge that God is to be loved and be rationally motivated to

conduct themselves in a manner which resembles this, but their heart is cold and void of love.

Love Toward God Defined

Love is the sweet motion of the heart toward God—infused into the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit—whereby they, by virtue of union with Him and in view of His perfections, delight themselves in God, and in a joyous embrace of His will, fully surrender themselves to His service.

(1) Love is a *motion*. Love is compared to fire; fire is swift in its motion and love is likewise vehement in its motion. “For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame” (Song 8:6). Love is a *sweet motion*. The heart is subject to many and various motions; some are grievous and some are joyous. Love refreshes the heart and is a sweet motion. Among men it is sweeter to love than to be loved. “O love, for delights!” (Song 7:6).

(2) *Love has God as its object*. Man has the aptitude to love and is inclined to love. Being ignorant of the worthiness and preciousness of God, however, he chooses something physical to be an object of love. He is remarkably attached to physical things in an inordinate manner, so that he corrupts himself and abuses that glorious principle that is within him. However, when the believer begins to perceive who God is, all that was beautiful and delightful before loses its luster. He withdraws his love from it—yes, he cannot love it, for he hates it, as it is opposed to the love of God. Instead, God becomes and remains the object of his love; he rejoices that he may love God, and he cannot be satiated in this love. It grieves him greatly that he does not love God more; God is and remains the most eminent of all objects that He can love. Yes, He is the only object and he does not wish to delight in anything except it be for God’s sake. “O love the Lord, all ye His saints” (Ps 31:23); “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength” (Ps 18:1). God is the object of love because He is God—and thus, for His own sake and because He is worthy of it. All that can generate love is to be found in God. “God is love” (1 John 4:19). Our love is set in motion by His love toward us. “We love Him, because He *first* loved us” (1 John 4:19). Our love is also kindled by the benefits of God. “I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications” (Ps 116:1); “O love the Lord ... for the Lord preserveth the faithful” (Ps 31:23). These are indeed stimuli, but the basis and actual reason for love is God Himself—because He is God, is love, is adorable, and is worthy. The purpose of this love

is not to acquire something else as a result of this—for then there would be something superior to God which one loved more.

(3) This love is neither begotten by our own activity or ability, nor can a creature give it to us. A heavenly minded minister may preach with a heart of love about love, but he is not able to kindle love in anyone's heart. Love is not for sale for all the belongings of one's house, but is only a free gift of God. *The Holy Spirit* kindles this divine spark in the heart of man. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom 5:5); "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thess 3:5); "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God" (Deut 30:6).

(4) The Holy Spirit, kindling love *in the hearts of God's children*, operates in harmony with man's nature. Man cannot love what he does not know and his love cannot go beyond that which he knows. The Holy Spirit thus also works this love by the medium of knowledge. God gives enlightened eyes of understanding to His children. He reveals Himself to them, they know His perfections, and the love of God is thus kindled in them. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8); "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37).

(5) God is a consuming fire to man who has sinned. Man cannot approach unto God, and even though God is most adorable, he nevertheless cannot love God. Love strives for union. The perception that one who is adorable and has power over us, were to hate us and take vengeance upon us, would thus cause us to flee. Therefore, a *union* must *first* be established. Union between God and the sinner is brought about by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. He brings them to God (1 Pet 3:18) and in Him they become one with God. "... that they also may be one in us ... I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:21, 23). Man can only love God when he can consider God to be his God, for otherwise the presence of God causes him to fear and flee from Him. Reverence and love go hand in hand, but fear and love cannot coexist. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). From man's side this union with God comes about by faith. By faith the soul approaches unto God. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph 3:12). By virtue of this union, one begins to love God. Love will then endeavor to exercise this union more and more and to preserve it—this being an exercise of friendship

as between friends and between a father and children. “He (Abraham) was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23); “I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15).

(6) To love God is a privilege of the elect. They, as others, were the children of wrath. However, God draws them out of the state of sin, gives them life and a childlike disposition, *and thus also a loving heart*. Since they are born of God, and since God is love, their nature resembles the nature of their heavenly Father, and they love Him. Their intellect, will, and affections have not only been rendered capable, but they are also active in love toward God. It is not sufficient for them to nourish love within, but they are active in manifesting this with their tongue, eye, and entire body. They are thus known as lovers of God and are therefore also referred to as “those that love.” “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps 97:10); “They that love His name shall dwell therein” (Ps 69:36).

The Deeds Whereby Love Toward God is Manifested

The love of God manifests itself in many deeds. We shall present them with the objective in mind to declare more clearly the nature of this love, so that an unconverted person, examining himself by means of this, will be convinced that he does not love God, and that gracious persons may be convinced that they love the Lord.

Wherever there is love toward God in the heart, God will *first* of all be *esteemed* and exalted exceedingly far above all that exists, this being true not only as far as judgment is concerned, but also with the entire will. Whatever is glorious, adorable, and eminent vanishes before the glory of God, and in esteem for that glory one will say with full acquiescence, “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty” (1 Chron 29:11).

Secondly, there is *joy* in love. If the soul is permitted to have an intimate view of God, she cannot mourn, but that view rejoices the heart so that all reason for sorrow disappears. “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11).

Thirdly, there is *reverence* in love. If the soul in a loving disposition lifts herself up to the Lord, the glory of the Lord will illuminate her in such a measure that she dares not look unto the Lord with uplifted eyes, but will bow down and be astonished that she is permitted to love the Lord. Being irradiated with divine love, she will sink away in her *nothingness*. She will conduct herself as David did in the presence of the Lord. “In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Ps 5:7).

Fourthly, love is *active*. Love motivates the seeking of communion, and the soul is intent upon this. It searches out all opportunities to draw near, and brings herself into the presence of the Lord, so that the Lord might cast an eye upon her and look upon her, and that she might also see Him. At one time she will turn to the Word, then to prayer, then to attending church, and then to joining the company of the saints—all this with the objective of finding the Lord. At times she may become lax, listless, and discouraged, but the heart will time and again turn upward, the eye will repeatedly look up, doing so at one time with quiet tears, then with a sigh, then again with a manifestation of her desire. “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth” (Song 3:1); “With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early” (Isa 26:9). There is a strong yearning in the soul. It is true within, “O when wilt Thou come unto me” (Ps 101:2); “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God” (Ps 42:2).

Fifthly, where there is love, there is *delight in the enjoyment of this love*. When the soul is near to God and can delight herself in mutual love, she can do without everything else; she will then be well-satisfied. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love” (Song 2:3-4); “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Ps 104:34).

Sixthly, where there is love, there will be *grief* over absence and being at a distance. A loving soul will readily perceive if she is near or afar off. This will immediately trouble her. “My beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him ... my soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but I could not find Him” (Song 5:4-6). Since He is her light and the strength of her life and the God of her joy and delight, how can it then be otherwise than that she will mourn if the Lord hides Himself, or if she, due to her conduct, has been the cause of estrangement? This is the cause for these sorrowful complaints: “How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me” (Ps 13:1); “For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me” (Lam 1:16).

Seventhly, where there is love, there is *willing obedience*. There will be joy if one may render a service to the loved one, in doing something in which the loved one finds delight. Such is also the

case here. If we love God, then we will also find delight in His will. We shall be united with this will and be very desirous that “whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor 5:9). This the Lord Jesus indicates: “If a man love Me, he will keep My words” (John 14:23); “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3).

Eighthly, where there is love, *the objects of love and hatred will be identical*. The enemies of the one will also be the enemies of the other, and the friends of the one will also be the friends of the other. “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee ... I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Ps 139:21-22); “I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts” (Ps 119:63).

Ninthly, where there is love, one will *sacrifice everything for the loved one*. Such is also the case here; he who loves God will readily surrender to God all that he has. When honor, possessions, life, etc., stand in opposition to God, His will and honor, a lover of God willingly surrenders everything, rejoicing that he may have something which he may sacrifice to God. Paul testified concerning the believing Hebrews: “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (Heb 10:34). And he said of himself: “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

Tenthly, love cannot be satisfied unless there be *a most intimate and perfect union*. Therefore, since a lover of God cannot find full satisfaction of this love in this life, and knowing that perfect and immediate union with God will only exist in heaven, he longs to die in order to find perfect satisfaction in this love. “... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ” (Phil 1:23).

Indications of the Absence of Love Toward God

Everyone knows by experience that love and its effects are indeed such as we before have stated it to be. Apply the nature and the deeds of love to its most adorable object, namely God, and examine your heart accordingly, and you, as in a clear mirror, will perceive whether or not you love God. You will perceive whether you have but a natural love for God as the Supreme Good—which is more a judging that God is worthy of adoration and that man is obligated to love Him, rather than a sweet motion of the heart which manifests itself in the previously mentioned deeds—or whether you love God in Christ as your God and Father, and although love may yet be small and imperfect, you nevertheless love in truth. If many were to search their hearts and examine

themselves in this respect, it would become evident to their conscience that the love of God was not in them. Come, examine yourself—may it be a means to your conviction and thus to your conversion. Listen therefore attentively to me and may it touch your heart!

First of all, if you miss that mentioned above, you do not love God. Is there to be found in you esteem, joy, reverence, yearning and seeking, a delighting in the enjoyment of these matters, a grieving over their absence? Is there also found in you obedience, hatred toward sin, and love for the godly? Are you willing to sacrifice honor, possessions, life, soul and body for the Lord's sake and do you yearn for felicity? Natural man, must you not answer: "These things are truly not to be found in me"? If one does not love God unless these motions are to be found in him—of which I am now also convinced—I therefore do not love God. I have indeed said, "Dear God; dear Lord!" I imagined, without self-examination, that I loved God, but now I perceive that I have deceived myself.

Secondly, he who loves the world does not love God, for God and the world stand in direct opposition to each other. He who loves the one hates the other. This is declared by the mouth of truth: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt 6:24). The apostle John confirms this: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:16). If you ask what the world is, then I answer: all that is visible, is upon earth, and occupies your heart—such as, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). If you ask what love to the world is, I answer you: to cleave intently to visible things, nourishment and clothing, money, honor and prestige (each in his own situations and circumstances), the love of man toward you, delicacies, revelry, lasciviousness, etc. and to have all your concerns, desires, thoughts, and endeavors comprehended in them. The eye focuses upon them, the ear listens to them, the mouth speaks of them, the hands touch them, the feet run after them, and everything—soul and body—is engaged to attain to them, and, having attained them, to hold on to them. Such a person will be either joyous or sorrowful, this being commensurate with whether everything proceeds according to his wishes. Thus, that which is of the world is all his delight and enjoyment. Although one may judgmentally say, "All this is vanity, and salvation is greater," while the heart is yet in

the world, the objective of life is that which is of the world, and all activity is focused upon that which is of the world, such a person is most certainly worldly and a man of this world—a person whose portion is in this life. You therefore who are convinced of this, be further convinced that you love the world and, consequently, that you do not love God.

Thirdly, you do not love God if you are still entirely permeated with self-love. This is not entirely dead in believers, but it no longer has dominion. It is acknowledged to be what it is, declared to be an enemy, striven against, and mourned over. However, wherever self-love has dominion, there can be no room for the love of God. It is entirely contrary to the nature of this love to love and seek self. “Charity ... seeketh not her own” (1 Cor 13:4-5). Paul posits love toward God and pleasures as two contradictory matters. “... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:4). One lives in self-love if in his entire conduct he has himself in view; that is, if he only seeks to obtain and keep things for himself. This is also true if hatred, envy, wrath, and vengeance are aroused against those who hinder him in his pursuit of self. This proves that one does not love God. This will be all the more evident if, in religion, one does not proceed beyond that which can coexist with self-love—renouncing religion fully or partially if it is detrimental to either our honor or possessions.

Now consider these three matters together and draw the following conclusion: He in whom the nature and deeds of love toward God are absent; and he who loves the world and lives in self-love—he does not love God. Since, however, the nature and the deeds of love toward God are absent in me, and since I do love the world and I am completely wrapped up in self-love, I therefore do not love God.

The Wretched Condition of Those Who Do Not Love God

Having convinced you that you do not love God, we shall furthermore show you your miserable condition, in order to thereby lead you to repentance.

First, be assured that you hate God. To hate God will be such dreadful abomination to you that you would not say this of yourself. You will be unwilling to admit this, and will say, “Oh no! I do not hate God.” It is nevertheless the truth. Do not flatter yourself now that your unrighteousness, which is hateful, is found out. It is beyond doubt that there are those who hate God. Observe this in the following passages: “... them that hate Me” (Exod 20:5); “... let them also that hate Him flee before Him” (Ps 68:1); “... haters of

God” (Rom 1:30); “... but now have they ... hated both Me and My Father” (John 15:24).

Objection: Although there are those who hate God, I nevertheless do not hate God—of this I am very much convinced.

Answer (1) You have been convinced from the previous discussion that you do not love God; from this it is certain that you hate God, for there is no intermediate position here. Relative to people and other things, it can be true in certain cases that not loving does not imply hatred—namely, when there are people with whom one is not acquainted nor has seen; one does not love them, but also does not hate them. He leaves it at that. However, those with whom we are acquainted, such as our employer, those with whom we continually work side by side, and with whom we continually have dealings—toward such persons we cannot be neutral. In our heart we shall either perceive interest and inclination, or aversion and disinclination. Inner aversion, even if it does not stir the passions to the highest degree, and disinclination are tantamount to hatred. Aversion and repulsion are equivalent to hatred.

(2) Furthermore, your aversion for all by which God reveals Himself as being holy and righteous, causing your conscience to become restless, indicates all the more that you hate God. The very thing that stimulates one to love or to hate will be loved or hated more and more. However, you hate, have an aversion for, and are repulsed by the light of true godliness since it discovers you to yourself and makes you restless in view of the impending judgment. God testifies of this: “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:20); “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you ... because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19).

(3) Furthermore, since you continually sin against God with pleasure and delight, is that not an unwillingness to have God be Lord over you? Do you not thus reveal your desire to be your own master and to live according to your will rather than His will? You thus despise and reject God. However, despising and rejecting issue forth from hatred and are evidences of hatred—just as the submissive rendering of honor, recognition, and obedience are evidences of love.

(4) Furthermore, since you love the world and those who are of the world, it is thus infallibly true that you hate the opposite. God and the world are opposites; he who loves the one hates the other. Therefore, from your love to the world you can conclude that you

hate God. Behold therefore, you who are convinced that you do not love God, you are in that condition which is so abhorrent to yourself, namely, that you hate God.

Secondly, all you who do not love God, be it known that God also does not love you. God hates you and you are God's enemy. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Hear once how God is disposed toward you. "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps 5:5).

Thirdly, God's wrath is upon you and will destroy you. "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me" (Luke 19:14, 27); "All they that hate Me love death" (Prov 8:36). What are you—you who do not love God? You are a wretched man in yourself. You—who are so abominable—are hated of God, the Lord Jesus, the holy angels, and the godly. You have nothing else to expect but to be eternally subject to the wrath of God. Poor creature! Have you not lived long enough in such a way? Is it not now time to awake ere it is too late? Therefore, arise and flee the wrath to come.

However, you who are lovers of God and who have read attentively what I have said concerning the nature and deeds of love, examine your heart relative to this. Did not your heart approve of all this and did it not receive a desire for the love of God? Did not your heart become convinced that you truly love God, even though this love is still very small and imperfect? Rejoice therefore in this most precious gift, for it is not due to the goodness of your nature that you have begun to love God; it has been given to you out of grace and been bestowed upon you due to God's love for you. It is an evidence that God has known you from eternity. "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Cor 8:3).

Believers Stirred Up to Love Toward God

If there is then a small beginning of the love of God in you, stir it up, so that the spark may become a flame. You, who grieve that you love the Lord so little and desire with your whole heart to love Him more, hear and permit your soul to be instructed regarding the love of God.

First, love is the purest of all virtues and no virtue is comparable to it—yes, a virtue is no virtue if it does not derive its luster from this virtue. We never resemble God so much as in love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8). He who loves is a partaker of the divine nature. In such a person there is light, purity, warmth, holiness,

joy, and all that can be related to salvation. You have already perceived how that your soul was enamored with love when you heard the exposition of the nature and deeds of love, as well as when you observed the passions of the soul which loves God (or heard this recounted by others). Therefore yield to your desire and be enamored with that which is so lovely.

Secondly, God is most adorable in Himself, and all that is adorable is to be found in God. To adore that which is beautiful, delightful, glorious, and lovely, is not a heavy task. It is naturally attractive to the heart. All this is true concerning God in an infinite manner, and he who beholds God cannot but love. Words are too insignificant, passions too feeble, and everything falls short in showing forth the beauty of the Lord. No one knows what God is but he to whom God has revealed Himself; and the heart of him to whom God reveals Himself will be kindled in love, because He is God—because He is the Lord who is worthy of all honor and love.

Thirdly, believers, the infinite God who is the eternal Love, loves you! “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3); “For the Father Himself loveth you” (John 16:27); “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us” (Eph 2:4). The sun cannot shine upon a mirror or it will reflect, nor upon some polished metal, or it becomes warm and reflects warmth in return. Can a man resist the love of Him who is most lovely and adorable, and who desires to be loved in return, without love being activated? Would not then the love of God toward you—the God in whom you believe—having indeed seen and tasted a small ray of that love, set your hearts aflame with that love? “We love Him, because He *first* loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Fourthly, in addition to this meditate upon all the great benefits which the Lord has bestowed, does bestow, and eternally will bestow upon you; they proceed from love and are evidences of it. The heart of man is so loveless that all the benefits which someone bestows upon him cannot persuade him to love that person. One receives the benefits, but the heart remains cold toward the giver. However, if benefits issue forth from love, and from one who is most adorable within himself and whom we ourselves love, then this will engage the heart. God, the adorable One, who loves you and who is somewhat loved by you, manifests His love to you, along with inestimable benefits as tokens of love. Out of love He gives you His Son as a Surety and Redeemer. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). He draws us, out of love, to Himself. “Yea, I have loved thee with an

everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). He adopts His own, out of love, as His children. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). He chastises them, out of love, to their advantage. “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth ... that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:6, 10). If they are sorrowful, His love is stirred up to comfort them. “God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16). Have you not become partakers of these benefits? If you know this to be so, and then perceive that they all proceed from a fatherly love, but your love is not kindled, I know not what will do it.

Fifthly, proceed to consider how delightful this is to God. You are privileged that you may love the Lord—and if you love Him, the Lord has delight in this and, according to His promise to those that love Him, will reward this love with love in return as well as benefits. What a wondrous goodness this is! This love originates with Him. By His love He enables them to love, and when they love Him, He rewards that love with love in return. “And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father” (John 14:21). The Lord’s eye is upon them and He keeps them from all evil. “The Lord preserveth all them that love Him” (Ps 145:20). He bestows benefits upon them which exceed all comprehension. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). Yes, even the evil which appears to be to their destruction will be reversed to the advantage of the lovers of God. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28). A lover of God is not only pleasing to God, but he is also loved by the Lord Jesus, the holy angels, and all believers. Everyone will behold such a person with pleasure and delight.

Sixthly, love is holiness and begets holiness—which believers long for and desire so strongly. Love preserves a believer in communion with God. “And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). This is not only a sweet, but also a holy and sanctifying disposition. Love teaches what duty is, stirs up to perform the duty, and guides in the execution of duty. Without love the very best deed is deficient (1 Cor 13:2). Instead, all must transpire in love. “... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). The entire law is comprehended in love. (Matt 22:37). “Now the end of the commandment is charity” (1 Tim 1:5). Love cannot remain concealed, for it is a holy fire. It is operative externally and is a strong incitement. “For

the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14). God, love The apostle therefore speaks of the “labour of love” (1 Thess 1:3). Love renders all labor easy, conquers all danger, penetrates through all opposition, and glories in tribulation. “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom 5:3-5). He who therefore wishes to be holy, let him become active in love toward God. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps 97:10).

Seventhly, follow the example of the Lord Jesus who loved the Father (John 14:31). Join yourself to the godly, for they are lovers of God and are frequently denominated as such (cf. Song 1:3; Ps 69:36; Isa 41:8). Exercise yourself to increase in love. “O love the Lord, all ye His saints” (Ps 31:23); “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21).

Believers to Abstain from That Which Hinders an Increase in Love

You therefore who delight to walk in the love of God, henceforth abstain from that which until now has hindered you from increasing and from breaking forth in love (Isa 54:3). These hindrances are the following:

(1) *Ignorance*. Little knowledge begets little love. Search the Word of God attentively, and thoughtfully give heed to His work without and within you. Focus upon getting a view of the Lord and labor to keep yourself near to the Lord.

(2) *Partial love*. Believers still have the old Adam within themselves which continually hankers for that which is of the world; self-love is not yet dead. If one yields somewhat to this love, it will increase all the more, and the more self-love increases, the more love toward God will be diminished. He who therefore wishes to increase in love toward God must resist and cast out the other love. This halting between two opinions prevents growth.

(3) *Infrequent communion with God*. Love wants to be exercised or else it will become cold. Separate yourself from all that you are permitted to separate yourself from, so that the Lord alone will have your heart. Continually pray, meditate, ask counsel, be dependent, and particularly observe your devotional time strictly. This will, time and again, restore you, and you will become more adept in acquainting yourself with the Lord.

(4) *Unbelief*. “Faith worketh by love”; if one does not believe that he is loved by God, he also cannot be stirred up by this love. However, if one believes that God loves him, his heart will in turn

be kindled with in love toward God. “We love Him, because He *first* loved us.”

(5) *Fearfulness*. If, for the sake of God’s cause, we are in danger of losing our honor in some measure; if harm, shame, and the loss of life are feared; and if we then shrink back, come up with excuses, and hide ourselves, love will then be very much injured, and it sometimes takes a considerable effort to recover a loving disposition. However, if we then break out of this when it comes to the point, love will receive double strength. Perfect love casts out fear—not only a fear for God, which causes a fleeing from God, but also the fear of danger.

Counsel for the Increase in Love Toward God

However, if you wish to increase in love:

(1) Take your life, honor, possessions, and all that you have, and surrender them to the Lord. Let Him care for them and do not concern yourself about them, so that you can readily part with them if love toward God requires this.

(2) Display the image of God which is in you—however small or great it may be—and show the world that you have a different nature, being in covenant with God.

(3) Believe in God’s love toward you and rejoice in this.

(4) Pray for the increase of love.

(5) Have continual fellowship with those who love God, and be their companion.

(6) Abstain from willful sins and be zealous to do the will of God. If you fall, do not continue in this sin, but with sorrow humble yourself, as having sinned against love, and arise again—holding fast to the unchangeable love of God and the immutability of the covenant. While thus acquainting yourself with the Lord, you will go on from strength to strength and become more abundant in love. “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2 Thess 3:5).

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

Love Toward Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ: The Object of Love Revealed in the Gospel

The law requires love toward God and toward everything which God enjoins us to love. Prior to the fall, love had no other object than God and man (comprehended under the word “neighbor”). The law of nature indeed does not teach anything beyond this. However, God has presented an additional object of love in the gospel—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man. The law requires the act of love, and the gospel makes known the object of love. The Lord Jesus is both God and a holy man. One must love Him as God (of whom we have just spoken). We consider Him here, however, as Immanuel—God and man in one Person—as Mediator and Savior, and in that capacity He is the object of our love. We have discussed the nature of love and it is thus not necessary to repeat it. We shall therefore stir you up to manifest such love toward the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus has few who love Him in the world. He would have more if He willed to have more, but He deems most not worthy of this. It is a great privilege and grace for the few who have been granted to love Him—and those who love Him, love Him so much that they will even give their life for Him. They will love Him until their death and to all eternity.

The Grievous Sin of Being Acquainted with Jesus and Yet Not Loving Him

The heathen, not having the gospel proclaimed to them, do not commit sin in not loving Him. They have not been commanded to do so, as He has not been declared to them. The Jews and Mohammedans

know of Jesus; it is therefore their sin that they do not love Him, that they hate Him, and all who, after His Name, are called Christians. The Antichrist, even though he boasts of the name of Christ, sins in that he and his followers do not love Jesus, but persecute Him and His church and become drunk with the blood of the saints. Heretics, who wish to be called “Christian,” are also guilty of sin in not loving Him—hating Him in His truth and in His children, while persecuting every one of them with all their might. These will all endure their judgment and it will be unbearable for them.

However, those who are in the church, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head, ought indeed to love Him; but how few are to be found in her who love Him!

(1) Many have no dealings with Him whatsoever. They hear His name mentioned, hear Him described and recommended in the sermons, make mention of Him themselves, but nevertheless are indifferent as to who and what He is. He is a stranger to them and they have no desire to know Him. They also make no effort in that respect, and if anyone wishes to make Him known to them, they respond, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of His ways.” They leave Him for what He is, and since they do not know Him they also do not love Him. For it is impossible to love someone we do not know. There is no sorrow over missing Him, no yearning for Him, no uniting of the heart to Him, and no grief over the fact that they do not love Him.

(2) Many know Jesus according to the letter, but not internally by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, such also have no love for Him. They do desire Him as a servant to protect them from hell and to help them get into heaven—of which they also have no correct perceptions. Beyond that they have no use for Him. There is no entering into covenant with Him, no surrendering to Him, no receiving of Him by faith unto justification and sanctification, no heart-union, and no exercising of fellowship with Him. They are neither acquainted with His presence nor with His absence. They are satisfied if they are but good church members, partake of the Lord’s Supper, live honestly, and have the illusion that they will be saved. On that basis they proceed—even though Jesus remains a stranger to them, remaining outside of their heart and thoughts. Since you are acquainted with human love, you will thus perceive that you have no love to Jesus whom you ought to love more vehemently than men. You may say that you love Jesus. But then I ask you, “How is this evident? Is there esteem and reverence for Him? Do you grieve and long for Him? Do you

endeavor to live in immediate union with Him? Is there a resemblance between your nature and His? Are you obedient and do you keep His commandments? Is there love for the most eminent among the godly? Is there an aversion toward the unconverted, of whom we have dealt with in the above, and of whom you yourself are convinced that they are such? If you consider your love toward men and apply this to love toward Christ, then you must be convinced that you do not love Jesus—whatever good thoughts you may have concerning yourself.”

(3) Many who are in the church show publicly that they do not love Jesus. They live in a worldly and ungodly fashion. They curse, gamble, dance, drink, eat excessively, commit fornication, secretly commit all manner of unrighteousness, hate the godly and persecute them with their tongue and deeds, doing whatever an enemy of Jesus would do. Such are baptized, stay with the church, and imagine that they will yet be saved. We declare to them, however, that they are enemies of Christ; they do not love Christ, but hate Him. It would have been better for them if they had never heard Christ mentioned, than that they, being adorned by the name “Christian,” oppose Christ to such a degree. They do not inflict injury upon Christ—for He is highly exalted above them—but upon themselves.

The Wretched Condition of Those Who Do Not Love Jesus

All who do not love Jesus, focus for a moment upon your wretched condition. You can *first* of all be convinced by the Word of God that it is impossible to be saved without faith. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). To be disobedient to the Son is not to believe in Him;¹¹ it is contrasted with believing in the Son. “... but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). You do not believe in the Son, even though you believe that He is who He is, and that He is a Savior for all believers. For you do not love Him and wherever there is no love, there is also no faith—”faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). If you do not wilfully want to deceive yourself, then you must pronounce the sentence of not being saved upon yourself.

Secondly, Jesus does not love you. “I love them that love Me”

¹¹ à Brakel makes this statement considering that John 3:36 reads as follows in the Statenvertaling: “Die de Zoon ongehoorzaam is, die zal het leven niet zien,” that is, “He that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life.”

(Prov 8:17). If He only loves those that love Him, then you do not belong to His beloved ones. He has died for those whom He loves (Eph 5:25). Not to be loved by Him is not to be redeemed by Him. Those who do not love the Lord Jesus are the objects of His hatred and wrath. Love and hatred stand in opposition to each other. “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom 9:13). If you do not love Jesus, Love of Christ Jesus also does not love you, and if Jesus does not love you, He hates you. “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness” (Ps 45:7); “The froward mouth, do I hate” (Prov 8:13). It was a dreadful experience for the bystanders “when He had looked round about on them with anger” (Mark 3:5). How dreadful it then will be if Jesus, who is not only a Lamb but is also called a Lion (Rev 5:5), will look upon you in wrath on the Day of Judgment! Consider this attentively, and place yourself among those (for you belong to them) of whom it is written: “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand” (Rev 6:16-17). How wretched you then are who do not love Jesus, for Jesus does not love you and you are no partaker of His suffering and death. He hates you and is provoked to wrath against you. Therefore tremble!

Thirdly, you who do not love Jesus are the most cursed creature under the sun. Listen to the following passage, and make application to yourself—a passage which cannot be read without terror: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (= accursed) Maranatha” (1 Cor 16:22). It is the greatest curse imaginable. Not only will this curse come upon such, but they themselves will be the curse, and therefore “shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa 66:24). You will eternally be in that condition if you do not repent in this life. You will experience what is written in Luke 19:27: “But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me.” Oh, that the terror of the Lord would persuade you to believe!

Impediments to an Assurance of a Love for Jesus

As wretched as those are who do not love Jesus, so blessed are they who do love Him. He who does not love Jesus readily imagines that he loves Jesus, but he who loves Jesus in truth frequently fears that he does not love Him. Such a person finds two reasons within himself causing him to have such suspicion about himself: He does not feel the sweet motions toward Jesus which, in his opinion,

ought always to be inherent in love. Furthermore, if he loved Jesus, he would be more obedient to Him and live a holier life.

Such ought to know *first* of all, that the probability of love being present is very great if one is so suspicious of his conduct. If this is accompanied with a desire to love Him, and there is grief that he does not love Him; if this does not only proceed from a fear for the judgment which will come upon those who do not love Him, and a desire to be saved (thus desiring love as but a means to acquire something), but these concerns proceed from and are accompanied with the desire to love Jesus—since one delights in the act itself of loving Him—then there is not only a probability, but proof that one loves Jesus. It is natural for upright souls to distrust themselves if they do not clearly perceive a matter within themselves. Such is the conduct of God’s children. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps 139:23-24).

Secondly, one must note the distinction between the *propensity*, *veracity*, and *the sensitivity of the passions of love*. One can have a true and genuine love which is very strong—even if he does not have sweet and sensible passions. Does a mother not love her child simply because she is not caressing, embracing, kissing, and delighting herself in viewing the beauty of her child? One knows that her heart has a loving disposition toward her child—also when she does not think upon it and is engaged in something else. One knows that love will surface time and again upon seeing the child, and that the distress experienced when the child is missing or meets with some discomfort proceeds from love. Her entire conduct is directed to seek the welfare of the child, even though she is not mindful of her objective. Such is also the case here. Even if you are not always occupied with sensible expressions of the heart and are not always engaged in embracing Jesus and exercising sweet communion with Him, the love of Jesus can indeed be truly in the heart, manifesting itself in deeds. Sweet frames in believers are generally engendered by the receipt of tokens of love from Jesus—when He kisses the soul with the kisses of His mouth, when His left hand is under her head, and when He embraces her with the right hand. However, this is a rare hour of short duration. Yet steadfast love is anchored in the heart, manifests itself at given occasions, and reveals itself in the objective of our conduct.

Thirdly, deficiency in sanctification is indeed indicative of the imperfection of love, but no proof of its total absence. Love is still small, and besides that, the old Adam is still present; these two

strive against each other. Our corrupt nature prevents love from breaking through—and furthermore, sins do not proceed from love but from our corruption. Love is, however, not strong enough to prevent and overcome these sins; love groans under them and is grieved by them. “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom 7:17). Wherever there is aversion for, hatred for, and opposition to sin; wherever there is a desire and love for godliness, prayer to the Spirit for sanctification, and elements of a desire to please Jesus (motivated by love), there is true sanctification. Believers, from this you now observe that your reasons for concern are unfounded and that they ought not prevent you in the expressions of your love toward Jesus. Concern and fear are impediments in this respect. To further assure you that you love Jesus, consider the following matters.

Marks of Love for Jesus

First, if you correctly understand the nature and deeds of love which have been presented in the previous chapter, you will be convinced that what has been said there is descriptive of true love. Examine now your heart in light of this in the presence of an omniscient God—being assured that if there is love, you do not have it of yourself but that it is a gift of God’s grace to you—and if you thus compare yourself with matters presented in that chapter, you will have to say, “Truly, I love Jesus!”

Secondly, place all that you love upon earth next to Jesus and observe then toward which side your heart leans. Would you rather be in the presence of those whom you love dearly, or would you rather be with Jesus if you were given and permitted to delight yourself in His love? Do you prefer money, valuables, and that which is beautiful, and delightful—or do you prefer Jesus? I do not ask for your judgmental observation, but what the issues of your heart are. If you were to make such a comparison, would you not say: “For me it is a thing of great importance. It is Jesus and Jesus only. Everything else, apart from Jesus, would only be grievous to me. To have Jesus, however, while having to do without everything else, would gratify me, and I would wilfully forsake everything for Jesus’ sake as long as I might live with Jesus in the enjoyment of love toward Him.”

Thirdly, if you had the assurance that you were saved, would you then have everything you desire? Would you then live joyously and peacefully? Do you say: “I would rejoice in this; however, it would not gratify me in this life. I must have Jesus and I must live in the enjoyment of mutual love with Him. If I would have to stay away

from Him in this life, I would end my days in sorrow. It is not sufficient for me to receive the benefits of Jesus. Rather, my desire is after His Person and to live with Jesus in love. ‘Jesus only’ is the wish of my heart, and, instead of everything else and while having to do without everything else, Jesus is sufficient for me.”

Fourthly, what is the reason for your sorrow? What is the focus of your yearning? When are things well with you? Is it when you earn a profit, are loved by many, and have success in everything according to your wishes? Is your answer: “No, but in the midst of prosperity I become sorrowful if I think that my Jesus has departed. If I hear or see someone who loves Jesus, my heart is overwhelmed, my tears quietly run down my cheeks, I lift my eyes upward toward Jesus, and I sigh, ‘Where could my faithful, sweet, and beloved Jesus be? Why does He tarry so long?’ He is my love, my joy, my life, my rest, my all, and I can no longer live in estrangement from Him. Oh, that He would turn to me, visit me, kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, and ignite my love by His love! How I would then delight myself, and how I would sit under the canopy of His overshadowing love! I would become drunk with love. And if He refreshes me with His presence, the earth is too low and the world too small for me. My soul then wishes to be delivered from this and I must be in heaven. Then I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Here soul and body are too weak to endure the influences of love; here Jesus departs again; after light comes darkness; and after warmth, coldness. Therefore, oh blessed eternity! Oh, to be eternally with Jesus!”

Fifthly, tell me, why do you go to church? Why do you turn to your Bible? Why do you so frequently seek for solitude? What do you do there? What do you seek there? Do you answer: “My Jesus is gone; He has departed; I seek Him whom my soul loveth. I mourn over my foolishness that I did not open unto Him when He knocked. There I mourn that I have caused Him to depart due to my sin and that I have grieved His Holy Spirit. There I sigh, weep, and pour out my bitter complaints. There I become discouraged when I think how others live in the enjoyment of love, how sweet Jesus is to them, that I must always stand from afar, and that Jesus hides Himself from me and does not allow Himself be found of me. For that reason I go to hear His Word if per adventure He might be there; for that reason I turn to my Bible if perhaps I might hear His voice there. For that reason I frequent the fellowship of the godly, if peradventure He might be pleased to reveal Himself in love to me there.” It is thus Jesus whom you are after.

Sixthly, with whom do you associate in the world—with worldly

people or with the godly? Do you say: “I can readily reply to that. Worldly and natural men have the stench of death, and I thus cannot tolerate to be in their presence. I consider them to be a detriment to me and I am not able to unite my heart with them. They are repulsive to me, and their religious conversation is abominable to me, since I perceive that they neither know Jesus nor are sincere of heart. They become intolerable to me if I perceive that they oppose those who are truly godly. If, however, I find someone who loves the Lord Jesus, such a person is precious in my eyes and my heart is wonderfully united with such a person—even if I have never before met or heard of this person. Those who love Jesus are glorious to me; my heart yearns for them; I love them, and with my entire heart I am one with them. With them I wish to be esteemed and despised, and with them I wish to live and die. I rejoice when I meet them, and deem myself too insignificant to be in their presence. Yet it is to my comfort, and I deem myself happy if I, as the least, may have fellowship with them and be their servant.”

Consider all this together. Even a natural man would maintain that such a disposition is a loving disposition, and that such deeds are true evidences of love. You yourself must be convinced of this—particularly if you read what has been said in the previous chapter. If you were to secretly listen to someone and would notice that his heart was thus engaged, would you not consider him to be happy? Would you not say to yourself, “Truly, this person loves Jesus”? Would you not love this person? Would not your affection for Jesus be stirred up? As you turn to yourself, you are indeed convinced that the above-mentioned disposition and motions are to be found in you. Therefore you must come to the following conclusion: “I cannot deny it and I do not want to deny it: I do and must say that I love Jesus, even though a quiet fear stirs somewhat within me.”

Neither allow yourself to be robbed of this, nor rob yourself of it—either by thinking that this is a matter too great for you or that you would deceive yourself, or because you are so sinful. Cast these thoughts away from you as being harmful to you, for they will prevent the sweet exercises of communion and the free communion with Jesus as being your own, and you being His. The livelier your faith is that you love Jesus—even though there is much that ought not to be there—the more love you will beget. Life is life and truth is truth.

The Blessedness of Those Who Love Jesus

How blessed are you who love Jesus, for God loves you! “He that

loveth Me shall be loved of My Father” (John 14:21); “For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me” (John 16:27). The Lord Jesus loves you: “He that loveth Me ... I will love him” (John 14:21). If you are loved by God and the Lord Jesus, They will accomplish in you all that proceeds from eternal love. Would God then not behold the beloved of His soul, deliver them from all that would harm them, and provide for them in all their necessities? “Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth; that Thy beloved may be delivered: save with Thy right hand” (Ps 108:5-6); “For so He giveth His beloved sleep” (Ps 127:2).¹²

Oh, how great is that good which the Lord will give to His beloved! “I ... will manifest myself to him” (John 14:23); “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23); “That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance” (Prov 8:21). God’s heart is inclined toward you, God’s eye is upon you, God’s hand is for you, and all discomforts come upon you in love (Rev 3:19)—all things must work together for you for good (Rom 8:28). All that is subservient to your salvation and can satisfy you is intended for you (1 Cor 2:9). Of you it may be said, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!” (Deut 33:29). The very zenith of your felicity is love itself and the privilege to love eternally—without end to remain satisfied with the immediate manifestations of love, and the mutual enjoyment of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Exhortations to Increase in Love Toward Jesus

Love is imperfect here, and we are therefore continually in need of exhortations. Therefore you who desire to become more abundant in your love toward the Lord Jesus, consider these matters:

First, consider Jesus in His preciousness. After the bride had described Him from His head to His feet, she concludes, “His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (Song 5:16). According to His divine nature He is the brightness of His Father’s glory and the express image of His person. He possesses all divine perfections to an infinite degree. According to His human nature He is perfectly holy. He who delights in holiness

¹² The rendering of the Statenvertaling differs significantly from the KJV. It reads as follows: “Het is alzo, dat Hij het zijnen beminde als in de slaap geeft.” Literally translated this reads, “He gives it to His beloved as during their sleep.”

must find delight in Him. As Mediator He is crowned with honor and glory, and He is most benevolent, friendly, compassionate, and loving. Grace and love are poured out upon His lips, and He is full of grace, truth, righteousness, and benevolence, so that He is simultaneously majestic and lovely. If there is therefore anything that will beget and stir up love within you, it must be the Lord Jesus—that is, if He would but reveal Himself to you and you could but behold the King in His beauty.

Secondly, love begets love. Jesus, however, loves you with the greatest love imaginable. Since He is love, He can therefore love those that are not loveable, and delight Himself in blessing His beloved ones. His love toward you is an eternal love, and thus without beginning and without end; it is a most intimate and vehement love. Meditate for a moment upon all in which he manifests His love toward you.

(1) He came into the world for your sake, assumed your nature, and became like unto you in all things, sin excepted. He even took upon Himself the form of a servant. He thus put Himself in your place, became your Surety, took your sins away from you, took them upon Himself as if He had committed them, and bore the punishment due upon your sins. “Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25).

(2) How He has been despised and what griefs He has borne! Everything was against Him; God was angry toward Him, and poured upon Him His righteous wrath against your sin. Go to the manger and follow Him to the cross. Behold Him there in His utmost distress and anxiety, and imagine that in His deepest sorrow He were to address you as follows: “Look at Me, My elect, My beloved. Love to you brought Me into this condition. My love is so great that I would be willing to suffer a thousand times more before I would allow you to perish.” In love He paid your ransom, accomplished eternal redemption for you, reconciled you with God and established peace between Him and you, and led you to Him as a reconciled Father.

(3) You are still bound upon His heart. He continually thinks upon you, prays for you, is your Advocate with the Father, and His eye is upon you to preserve you.

(4) Consider in what a lovely manner He has drawn you to Himself. For your sake He sent the gospel to the locality where you were to be born, and when your time came He called you, allured you, and, while knocking, stood before your heart waiting for you to open to Him. When you were averse to His way and disobedient, He bore you with longsuffering, He regenerated you, illuminated

you, gave you a heart that fell in love with Him so that you yourself sought Him and ran after Him.

(5) How frequently He has spoken to your heart! How many kisses of love has He given you! How frequently has He comforted you in your sorrow, delivered you in your perplexities, and encouraged you in your discouragements! With how much longsuffering has He borne with your weaknesses! Time and again He has manifested His goodness to you, as if you had not sinned against Him at all!

(6) He will at last bring you unto Himself into heaven in order that you may be eternally with Him. There He will glorify you; there He will cause you to rejoice; there He will cause you to be perfect in love. He will thus be with you eternally and you with Him, to eternally satiate you with love. Meditate upon this, and believe this, for if this cannot stir up your heart to love in return, you are indeed void of love. Therefore stir up your love.

Thirdly, there is joy in love, and the heart of man is inclined toward joy. There is no joy in the world for you. That which is most delightful grieves you when Jesus has departed. You will have to acquiesce in a song I once made about the month of May:

How sweet is the time of songs and flowers,
 in which animal and man rejoice!
 Yet it is nothing but sorrow to me
 as long as I miss the love of Jesus.
 But if He would but speak to my soul,
 “Thou art Mine and I am Thine eternally,”
 And cause my sinful life to disappear—
 then it is for me the time of songs and
 flowers!

If the soul may sit in the shadow of the love of Jesus, and if her love sweetly issues forth to her Beloved, she has a heaven full of joy, and only then is she in her element. Then she wishes that this love would never be disturbed—just as the bride expressed it, “I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please” (Song 2:7). Jesus rejoices in the expressions of His love to you. “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (Isa 62:5). Likewise a loving soul also rejoices in the expressions of her love to Jesus, and in the sensible enjoyment of Jesus’ love toward her. “The King hath brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in Thee ... the upright love Thee” (Song 1:4).

Fourthly, consider attentively how Jesus is the object of the love of the Father, the angels, and believers.

(1) The love of the Father goes forth to Jesus; God loves Him.

“For the Father loveth the Son” (John 5:20); “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 17:5).

(2) The holy angels love Him, rejoice in beholding Him, worship Him reverently (Heb 1:6), and are ready to serve Him (Matt 4:11)—as seen at His birth, in His suffering, and at His resurrection. At His coming unto judgment they will accompany Him with joyful willingness and love.

(3) Believers on earth love Him, their hearts go out after Him, and He is the focal point of the passions of their love. “Therefore do the virgins love Thee” (Song 1:3). The bride continually has the word *Beloved* in her mouth. Just consider how each believer mourns when Jesus is absent; how they long for His coming to them; and how delighted they are when they may sweetly enjoy His fellowship. All their asking, crying, and weeping is for Jesus. In Jesus only do they find all their satisfaction. What beautiful expressions we find in the meditations of believers! “*It is much better for me to die for Jesus than to rule over the world—My love is crucified—If you were to cut my heart in a thousand pieces, on each piece you would find the name Jesus written with golden letters—Lord Jesus, I love Thee more than my possessions, than my loved ones, and than myself—Money must perish (with all those who love possessions more than fellowship with Jesus for one day),*” etc. Shall the heart of each believer bring forth a flame of love, and shall your heart then also not be set aflame? Come, join yourself to all who love Jesus, and say with them, *Jesus, sweet Jesus—Jesus is the most eminent of all who I can find delight in. Jesus, if Thou dost desire to have me, I desire to have Thee and desire none other than Thee. To all creatures I say, “No!” If Jesus were to ask you, “Lovest thou Me?” would you then not answer, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee?”* Therefore hold fast to this and continually immerse yourself in this love. Let it give you wings to render you fit to run your course with joy. Let the love of Jesus compel you to live a life pleasing to Him, in order to glorify Him here, and patiently wait until He takes you to be eternally with Himself.

Guards Against All That Impedes the Exercise of Love Toward Jesus

Henceforth be diligent in maintaining, increasing, and frequently stirring up this love. To that end you must be on guard for some matters, and despise others.

First of all, be on guard against *ignorance*. Knowledge begets love, and one must therefore strive to increase in the knowledge of Jesus. Those who have but little knowledge are generally very deficient and unstable in love. If the Lord comes to them in an

extraordinary manner, it goes well, but if that ceases, their love immediately becomes more faint. However, those who by the Word have become more acquainted with Jesus in all that pertains to Him, are more able to view Him from nearby and to become enamored with Him. Their love is more steadfast—also when such sweet encounters are not experienced so sensibly.

Secondly, be on guard against *partial love*. If the world and all that is in it is still desirable and attractive to the eye and the heart, and if you are still so set upon your own will, honor, and delight, the love for Jesus cannot be very strong. Jesus wants to have the heart for Himself. If the enemy gains entrance, Jesus departs; and if He departs, your love will become weaker. Therefore, do not halt between two opinions. If you wish to love the world and to be loved by her, then love it in its entirety and let go of Jesus. If, however, you wish to love Jesus and be loved by Jesus, then love Him and Him alone and let go of the world. Pay no attention to it any longer.

Thirdly, be on guard against a *lack of fellowship*. Love wants to be maintained. If we are too far from the fire, we shall become cold. The very closest of friends will become estranged due to lack of fellowship. Such is also the case here. Jesus wants to be sought for and perceive that His friendship is of great value to us. Jesus wants to be waited on and to have time made available for mutual manifestations of love. You must therefore frequently endeavor to speak to Him and to tell Him again what your heart's disposition toward Him is, while in an intimate manner expressing your desire toward Him, and your grief that you cannot love Him more. That stirs up love.

Fourthly, be on guard against *unbelief*. If we readily doubt our portion in Jesus, if we have no confidence that He loves us, if we are actively contradicting all arguments that He has manifested love toward us, readily acquiescing in arguments to the contrary—yes, searching them out as if it were a masterpiece to conclude that Jesus does not love me and that I do not love Jesus—then, you will be incapable of exercising love and receiving love in return. Be on guard therefore neither to quarrel against love, to hold Jesus' love suspect, nor to deny the graces which are evidences of Jesus' love, for that is the direct way to cause Jesus to depart.

Fifthly, be on guard against *willful sins*. Jesus is holy, delights in holiness but hates ungodliness. He has compassion with daily weaknesses and improprieties, and will not withhold the manifestation of His love for that reason. However, willful sins are committed against love—and then Jesus will withhold His love and His Spirit will be grieved. And when Jesus withholds His love, you will also not be able to love Him. Willful sins will render you incapable of

exercising love. The conscience will be troubled, you will lose your freedom, and you will not dare to approach in prayer. You have ruined too much and there has come too great a separation. At times it will take much effort before a loving disposition will be restored.

Sixthly, be on guard against *fearfulness*, that is, to be in some measure ashamed to confess Him. You wish to exercise love in secret, but do not wish this to be known by others. One is ashamed of Him for fear of harm or shame, and thus withdraws himself. If you enter into situations requiring that love toward Jesus, His honor, and His cause be manifested, you then hide and dare not say, “This is my Beloved, yea, this is my friend.” Jesus readily perceives this and it displeases Him. It is the cause that Jesus will hide Himself from you and it is evidence that you have but little love—love which is very much diminished by such conduct.

Exhortation to Stir Up Love Toward Jesus

It can be deduced from the foregoing what it is that stirs up love, and what is to be observed to that end.

- (1) You must believe that He loves you and acknowledge every true grace to be evidence of His love toward you.
- (2) You must continually separate yourself from everything and only find delight and satisfaction in love toward Jesus.
- (3) You must surrender your all to Jesus, without holding anything back, and offer yourself and all that you have to Jesus, declaring a willingness to do without it for His sake.
- (4) You must declare Jesus’ beauty and preciousness to others, to the end that they also would begin to love Jesus—and that He thus shall be loved by many.
- (5) You must joyfully wear His livery, being desirous for everyone to know that you have Jesus as your Lord. Furthermore, if anyone were to do anything toward Jesus which would be disadvantageous, he will have us with soul and body as his opponent, and we shall defend His honor with all that we have.
- (6) With tender carefulness you must be on guard against that which displeases Him and endeavor to please Him, to be conformed to Him, and to resemble Him in His nature.
- (7) You must take time to delight yourself in mutual love, and if some estrangement has occurred and darkness has come, you must endeavor to restore familiarity.
- (8) You must yearn, and stir up this yearning time and again—to depart and be with Christ—doing so by continually reflecting upon what will be above and how sweet it will be to always be with the Lord. Amen.

 CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

The Fear of God

Love toward God (which we have discussed), engenders *the fear of God*—which we shall now consider. Love and fear are conjoined in Deut 10:12: “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him.”

The Word Fear Defined

Fear is either expressive of reverence or terror. Fear as terror is generally expressed by the Hebrew words $\rho\omega\gamma\mu$ (*magor*), and $\delta\xi\pi$ (*pachadh*), and by the Greek word $\phi\omicron\&\beta\omicron\phi$ (*phobos*). Fear as being reverence is denominated in Hebrew as $\eta\rho\psi$ (*yirah*), and in Greek as $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\beta\epsilon\iota/\alpha$ (*eulabeia*). However, these words are occasionally also used without this distinction.¹³

Fear issues forth from love—either for ourselves or for God. Self-love engenders fear when something occurs which could deprive us of something good or whereby some evil could befall us. We fear deprivation, or the evil itself, and whatever or whoever would deprive us of that which is good or whereby evil could be inflicted upon us. God has created self-love in man and wills that we make use of it. The law requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:39). It is therefore not sinful to fear deprivation and evil. This fear was inherent in Adam’s nature prior to the fall,

¹³ The sentence which follows here in the Dutch version is only applicable to the Dutch language and has therefore not been translated. This Dutch sentence reads as follows: *Wij noemen vrezen ook vruchten, afkomstig van het Hoogduitsch; op zich zelf wordt het nu zelden gebruikt, maar wel in samenvoeging in het woord godvruchtig, ‘t welk hetzelfde is als godvreezend.*

even though there was no occasion for this fear to arise in him. The Lord Jesus also had such fear (cf. Matt 26:37; Heb 5:7). One may indeed be fearful of death and other discomforts, and thus also of wild animals and evil men. This fear becomes evil, however, if it begets the use of evil means—either to preserve or acquire that which is good, or to avoid evil. This is true if we fear man more than God and, in neglecting both the fear of God and obedience toward His commandments, we seek to get man on our side in sinful ways. We then give no heed as to whether we displease God; as long as we can please men in order that they will do us no evil, but good. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

Since we must have love for ourselves, and fear issues forth therefrom, we must have more fear for evil which relates to the soul than to the body. Since, the soul’s well or woe is dependent upon God, we must be fearful out of love for our own salvation, and must fear God’s wrath and judgments. “My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments” (Ps 119:120). An unconverted person must also, by fear for the eternal wrath of God, be persuaded to believe (2 Cor 5:11). A converted person must, for fear of spiritual harm, stir himself up to be earnest. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb 4:1).

Two Kinds of Fear: Slavish and Filial Fear

Relative to this fear, a distinction is made between slavish and filial fear. *Slavish fear* causes a slave to do the will of his master for fear of being struck. Such slavish fear of God is better than a stubborn and insensitive despising of God and His judgments. It is useful if someone is brought to repentance by this (cf. Matt 3:7; Amos 4:12). Someone who is presently converted need not be concerned whether or not his conversion is genuine, because he was driven to Christ out of fear for damnation rather than love to God, for we have shown that we must cherish our well-being and fear that which is evil for us—this compelling us to repentance. Slavish fear is evil, however, if it is nothing more than terror causing us to flee from God. We repeat: Man, out of love for his salvation and out of fear for his damnation, must fear God and thereby be compelled to repentance and obedience. Self-love is, however, not the basis for filial fear. To be fearful of provoking God to anger because He has power to punish; to be obedient so that He would not withdraw His favor from us, but manifest more

of it to us—this is not the nature of filial fear, even though the matter itself is good and characteristic of God’s people. The motivation for the filial fear of God is not self-love, but love to God because He is God and with view to His majesty—even if this were to result neither in good nor evil on our behalf.

The Definition and Nature of Filial Fear

Filial fear is a holy inclination of the heart, generated by God in the hearts of His children, whereby they, out of reverence for God, take careful pains not to displease God, and earnestly endeavor to please Him in all things.

It is a motion of the heart. The noble soul is gifted with emotions, and dependent upon what the objects are, is moved to either joy or sorrow, love or hatred, fear or fearlessness. As far as the fear of God is concerned, man is insensitive, hard, and without emotion. “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). In regeneration, however, the heart of stone is removed and a heart of flesh is received which is soft and pliable, and is very readily moved upon beholding God, dependent upon the measure in which God reveals Himself to the soul. If God is perceived as being majestic, a motion immediately arises within their soul—a motion which is becoming to the creature in respect to God.

It is a holy motion. Since an unconverted person is in essence nothing but sin, also all that proceeds from him is distorted. The ability to fear is directed toward an erroneous object and is exercised in a disorderly fashion. Believers, however, having been sanctified in principle, are also sanctified as far as their inner motions are concerned. Their fear has a proper object and consequently functions in a holy manner, that is, in faith and love. They are devout and fear God (Acts 10:2).

God generates this holy motion. By nature man is totally unfit for any good work. He finds no delight in God and has no desire to fear the Lord. He may be terrified of God, but he cannot fear Him rightly. However, God enables His own to fear Him. “... but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40).

The Holy Spirit is therefore called “the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).

This filial fear is found *in the hearts of God’s children*. The heart is the seat of all motions—evil as well as good. God has enclosed this precious gift in the hearts of His children, and all the motions relative to fear proceed from the heart. Their fear neither consists in talk, refraining from evil and doing good, nor in the appearance of fear, but rather in truth. The heart, intellect, will, and affections are

involved here and the heart brings forth various deeds which manifest the fear of God. Only God's children fear the Lord, and therefore those who have this virtue are called *God-fearing* people. "... the same man was just and devout" (Luke 2:25); "... devout men" (Acts 2:5); "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial" (Acts 8:2).¹⁴

Filial fear is engendered by *reverence for God*> God is the object of this fear. "O fear the Lord, ye His saints" (Ps 34:9). God is eminent, glorious, and majestic within Himself—also if there were no creatures. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" (1 Chron 29:11). Hereby God is awe-inspiring in and of Himself. With the advent of intelligent creatures which observe the brilliance of His glory, it cannot be that they have reverence for Him who is both infinite and majestic. A natural man does not know God. Therefore he may be fearful of His judgments, for calamities, and sometimes may acknowledge God to be terrible (although he generally does not progress this far), but he cannot have reverence for Him. That is the privilege and blessedness of believers. A sinful person cannot tolerate God's majesty. He would flee in terror from God, for He is to him a consuming fire. However, in Christ God is a reconciled Father to His children, and therefore they simultaneously love and revere Him. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps 2:11).

Reverence requires, *first* of all, a knowledge of and beholding of God's majesty. "For we ... were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet 1:16).

Secondly, there must be a delightful acknowledgement and a wholehearted approbation that God is so majestic. "Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? for to Thee doth it appertain" (Jer 10:7).

Thirdly, there must be a reverent bowing before the Lord and a worshiping of Him. "... in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Ps 5:7); "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Ps 95:6).

Fourthly, there must be a covering of the countenance, not daring to behold the brilliance of His glory. Thus the angels covered their faces (Isa 6:2), and of Moses it is written, "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exod 3:6).

Fifthly, there must be a trembling as a result of not being able to

¹⁴ Wherever the word "devout" is used in the KJV, the Statenvertaling uses either the word "godvrezend" or "godvruchtig." Both words would be translated as "god-fearing."

endure the Lord's majesty. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence" (Jer 5:22); "And when He had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling" (Dan 10:11).

Sixthly, reverence for God engenders in God's children *a careful guarding against displeasing God* by disobedience and the commission of sins, and a being *active to please Him in all things*. Solomon frequently presents these manifestations of the fear of God in his proverbs. "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (Prov 3:7); "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov 8:13); "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Prov 16:6). We also read this in Jer 32:40, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." We read furthermore, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7); "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov 14:27). This is the nature of the fear of God.

Exhortation with the Intent to Convict Those Who Do Not Fear God

What does it avail us if we understand the nature of a virtue and do not practice it? No one is acquainted with the beauty of virtue, except the one who practices it. God requires this from all men and enjoins His children to do so. Let the voice of God enter into your hearts. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God" (Deut 6:13); "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles 12:13). He who loves God and His honor will cry out with David, "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (Ps 33:8). Even if the world does not fear God, the church and God's children must indeed do so. "Fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel" (Ps 22:23); "O fear the Lord, ye His saints" (Ps 34:9). They are therefore denominated as God-fearing persons.

If we now observe the world, it is evident that the fear of God is absent in the heart of man. One must think of the world as Abraham did of Gerar. "And Abraham said. ... Surely the fear of God is not in this place" (Gen 20:11). If we consider the church, then most members declare that the fear of God is neither before their eyes nor in their hearts. And what about you? Examine yourself. What will you answer upon the question, "Do you fear God?" Is your focus in your walk of life upon the Lord? Does reverence for His majesty arise within when you think about Him, speak of Him, or hear mention made of Him? Do you reverently bow before Him, and do you tremble if you are about to address Him in prayer? If a sinful thought or motion arises within you, does the fear of God motivate you to suppress it? Does the fear of

God prevent you from all sinful association with men, fornication, unrighteousness, lies, backbiting, cursing, wrath, and other sins? Does reverence for God motivate and urge you to the practice of religion and to do whatever the Lord has enjoined you to do as being pleasing unto Him? Or do you love the things of this world? Are all your concerns related to the acquisition and preservation of these things? Do you look to people as if they were able to give or withhold them from you? Do you seek to please them even if it displeases God, and are they the measure of your fear? Reflect for a moment upon your former life and give attention to the current disposition governing your deeds. If you are inwardly convinced that, until now, you have not served God in truth, then take your wretched condition—both current and future—into consideration, and it possibly could be a means whereby the terror of the Lord would persuade you to believe. Give ear for a moment—you who neither fear the Lord, nor give heed to Him but who despise the Lord, His Name (Mal 1:6), and His holy things (Ezek 22:8). Give ear, you who arrogantly and proudly oppose the Lord. David says concerning you, “Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Thy commandments” (Ps 119:21).

The Serious Consequences of Being Void of the Fear of God

(1) Be assured that God will give you a fearful and trembling heart as long as you do not fear Him, so that you will find neither rest nor safety anywhere—rather, your own heart and conscience will be continually tormented. The wish of David will come upon you. “Put them in fear, O Lord” (Ps 9:20). Be assured that the curse which the Lord threatens will come upon you. “The Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear” (Deut 28:65-67); “I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth” (Lev 26:36); “And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isa 2:19).

(2) Be assured that if you continue on without fear for the Lord—even though you may peacefully approach your end—the terror of the Lord will at last come upon you. When you will be forsaken by

everything, the Lord will be a terror to you and strike terror into you. Oh, how many are there who breathe their last breath with consternation and full of terror! Remember Belshazzar, and consider that you will also experience this. “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Dan 5:6). In that condition he departed from life.

(3) And even if no terror were to come upon you in this life and at death, you will nevertheless be overcome with fear on every side after your death. Then wrath and anger, oppression and consternation will eternally be upon you. Then you will know what it is to fall into the hands of God. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). Give heed to what is expressed in Ps 76:7: “Thou, even Thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?” It is in this manner that the prophet presents this terror: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us will dwell with the devouring fire? who among us will dwell with everlasting burnings” (Isa 33:14). Oh, that you would quietly reflect upon, and apply all this to yourself—and that you would believe it!

The Fear of God in Believers

We shall now turn to you, believers. You will indeed observe your deficiency in this, but you will also be able to perceive that the Lord has put the principle of His fear within you.

(1) Do you not desire that disposition of the fear of God as we have described it in the foregoing? You do not only acquiesce in this, judging it to be good and becoming, but you grieve that you have so little of it and are desirous for a greater measure of it. This is an indication that you are already a partaker of it, for the servants of God are described as such. “...Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name” (Neh 1:11).

(2) Do you not perceive heartfelt intentions and initiatives to walk in the fear of the Lord? Can you find any delight in having subdued a sin and in having done some good, unless this has been done in the fear of God? And perceiving your deficiency and impotence toward that which you love, is it not frequently your earnest prayer to God that He would fulfil His promise to you in giving His fear in your heart? Behold, there you have evidence that you have the nature of those that fear God. This was David’s prayer: “Unite my heart to fear Thy name” (Ps 86:11).

(3) Is your desire for the fear of God entirely impotent and your prayer entirely fruitless, or do you perceive the principles of it in

your actions? Does not God reveal Himself to you in His majesty? Does not your heart say that the Lord is indeed worthy to be served? Are not reverential motions stirred up within you toward God? Do you not at times bow in reverence before Him? Has it not been your experience that, due to a sense of His majesty, you have cast your eyes downward, closed your eyes, and covered your face with your hands? Did not a holy trembling come upon you at times, and was it not your delight if these motions became more sensitive—yes, did it not cause you to rejoice when thinking upon this afterwards, wishing it to recur and that it would always be thus? Would you not have committed many sins, and neglected many good things if the fear of the Lord had not prevented you? Does not the fear of God nip many sins in the bud, and does not this motivate you to perform your duty? If these things are within you, you must be convinced of the truth, even though the measure is yet small. You will observe your disposition in Job: “For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of His highness I could not endure” (Job 31:23). Such was also true for Nehemiah: “... but so did not I, because of the fear of God” (Neh 5:15). Acknowledge therefore this received grace, and it will render you capable to read the following rebuke and exhortation with fruit.

Believers Rebuked

The more clearly you will be convinced of the principles of the fear of God within you, the more you must grieve over your deficiency in, as well as your sinning against the fear of God. These manifest themselves in the disposition of the heart, the penetration of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds contrary to the revelation of God’s presence, and in the fear of man whereby the fear of God must consequently yield.

First, we are to be severely reprimanded, if, knowing that God is majestic, having experienced how good it is to humbly walk with the Majestic One, and knowing how invigorating it is to walk in the way of uprightness, we nevertheless neglect to thus focus upon the Lord and fear Him continually. This makes us vulnerable to all manner of sin. When the doorkeeper sleeps with the door wide open, every lust can then enter and exit without any impediment—and even if we are aware of this, there is nevertheless no strength to oppose it and we are overcome before realizing it. If then, with Samson, we wish to offer resistance, we shall have lost our strength.

Secondly, this is followed by a disposition which is yet more evil, namely, when we even proceed to satisfy this lust, doing so not only when our conscience points out its evil and counsels us not to

begin; and upon having begun, counseled us to desist from and subdue the lust, to be silent in the midst of an evil discourse, and to refrain from the sin which we are currently committing; but also when our conscience causes us to reflect upon God and His majesty. Indeed, this is especially true (which is most abominable) when God manifests Himself to the soul, sensibly discourages the soul, and, so to speak, shakes the finger and says, “I am here, and I certainly see what you are doing. Cease, or else I shall cause you to feel My displeasure.” It is a setting aside of the fear of God, a grieving of the Holy Spirit, and the inflicting of a deadly wound upon the soul when, due to the agitation of sin, we are driven onward and seek to hide ourselves from the presence of God in order to be able to proceed, and then actually prevail in carrying out the sin which is at hand. If God were not infinitely longsuffering and immutable, He would cast away such impertinent souls.

The third sin committed against the fear of God is *to fear man*—a sin to which the godly are still vulnerable. If we have not yet fully denied ourselves in regard to honor, love, advantage, and pleasure, nor are much inclined to acknowledge the insignificance of man (that is, that man can neither stir nor move, can do neither good nor evil to us), and we have not accustomed ourselves to see the hand of the Lord in all things, thus perceiving that God alone does everything, and that all men are but instruments in His hand, being used either to do good or evil unto us—this will engender a looking unto man. In time of war we consider the multitude and courage of the soldiers and we stand upon our sword (Ezek 33:26). “Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations” (Jer 21:13). If, however, we perceive that the might of the enemy supersedes ours, we are fearful and the heart is moved “as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind” (Isa 7:2). We fear man when in sickness, legal cases, business transactions, in the plying of our trade, in pursuing our desire which must be attained to by the instrumentality of men, etc.; we look to men and, in our thoughts end in them—as if it had to come from them. We vehemently seek to have them on our side, and we are fearful of losing their favor. In our association with men we fear the one *for his wisdom* (which is no match for ours), the other *for his status and imposing personality*, the *third for his wickedness*, and the *fourth for his benevolence which we would not like to lose*. Now if such a person has no desire for godliness and would become angry if you were to manifest the image of God and perform your duty, and if, out of fear for him, you were to hold back and accommodate him in the commission of sin, behold, then the fear of God is rendered

inferior and must yield. There God is on the one side, and man on the other side. There the fear of God is on the one hand and the fear of man on the other hand. If, however, the fear of man motivates us to do something which is contrary to the fear of God, then we reject the fear of God because of the fear of man.

This is a dreadful sin, for first of all God has forbidden it. “Fear not them which kill the body” (Matt 10:28); “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die” (Isa 51:12). Secondly, it is the greatest act of contempt toward God if He must yield to man for you. It is idolatry and a sin of the heathen. “Who ... worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom 1:25). Thirdly, it is a denial of the providence of God—as if God did not reign; as if the creature could function independently. Fourthly, it affects and troubles you continually. Fifthly, it causes you to fall from one sin into the next, and you ought therefore to be ashamed of your previous fear of man. Be warned and give heed to the exhortation of the Lord: “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of” (Isa 2:22). Follow David in his noble courage. “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me” (Ps 118:6).

Incentives for the Fear of God

It is not sufficient to be on guard against the sins which are contrary to the fear of God; rather, it is our great duty to conquer them all by the fear of God. The livelier the fear of God is, the less sin will have any effect. Therefore in the future commit yourself fully to tenderly fear the Lord your God in order that the fear of God may guard you and direct your thoughts, words, and deeds. Oh, if only I could make you more lively in this! Give careful attention to the following incentives; may you be tender and pliable.

First, does not God have all the perfections within Himself which are able to engender reverence? He is majestic, glorious, omnipotent, holy, good, and awe-inspiring; that is His nature. How can anyone therefore be in the presence of God without fear and reverence? Consider what has been expressed in the Word of God: “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders” (Exod 15:11); “That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE Lord THY GOD” (Deut 28:58); “For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: He also is to be feared above all gods” (1 Chron 16:25); “O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God” (Neh 1:5). His wrath upon the sinner is dreadful. “Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy

fear, so is Thy wrath” (Ps 90:11). His goodness begets reverence in order that He may thus be feared in love. “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Ps 130:4). Is it not proper, becoming, and requisite that you, having been created by God and having received grace from God, fear this majestic God and tremble before Him?

Secondly, the root of the matter is indeed in you. You desire it and you cannot hear the fear of God mentioned, or your heart is inclined to it and your desires are stirred up. Why would you subdue this desire? All that has a principle of life is desirous for growth and perfection—which is thus also true for you in this respect. It is indeed natural if a servant fears his master and a child his father. You have chosen the Lord to be your Lord, and has not He given you the Spirit of the adoption of children and set you among the children? Have you not entered into covenant with Him that He would be a God unto you and that you would be the recipient of His favor? This must stir you up to fear your Lord and your Father. “If then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear” (Mal 1:6). Acknowledge this relationship and it will beget filial fear in you.

Thirdly, the fear of God is the fountain of all the holiness which delights you. Sinful lusts will lose their potency, corruptions which surface will readily be subdued, you will be stopped in the middle of sinning, and you will find yourself inclined toward the practice of all manner of virtues. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10); “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom” (Prov 15:33); “The fear of the Lord is clean” (Ps 19:9); “The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: “ (Prov 19:23); “... perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).

Fourthly, the Lord has pleasure in those that fear Him. It ought to be a very precious matter to us that God is pleased with us. It ought to be our great desire and earnest endeavor to be pleasing to the Lord. God is, however, pleased with the fear of God, for therein the acknowledgement and the glorification of His perfections coalesce. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him” (Ps 147:11). How lovely it is when man delights himself in God and when God finds pleasure in man!

Blessings Promised to Those Who Fear God

Fifthly, although love for our own well-being is not the basis for the fear of God, we nevertheless may and must be stirred up by it. It is noteworthy that so many blessings are expressed and so many benefits are promised to the godly. Consider the temporal benefits.

(1) There is satisfaction: “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure” (Prov 15:16).

(2) There is sufficient daily supply: “There is no want to them that fear Him” (Ps 34:9); “Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine” (Ps 33:18-19); “He hath given meat unto them that fear Him” (Ps 111:5).

(3) There is sacred protection: “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him” (Ps 34:7).

(4) There is abundance: “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” (Prov 22:4).

(5) There is all salvation: “Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him” (Ps 85:9).

Consider the promises relative to the soul.

(1) There is the revelation of heavenly mysteries: “What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant” (Ps 25:12, 14).

(2) There is divine compassion: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him” (Ps 103:13, 17).

(3) There is the answering of prayers: “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Ps 145:19).

(4) Let me thus bring it all to a conclusion: “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord” (Ps 112:1); “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God” (Eccles 8:12); “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!” (Ps 31:19). If it pleases the Lord to stir you up by so many benefits and promises, it ought to please you to be stirred up by them. Being desirous for the promises, you must seek their fulfillment in the way whereby the Lord wishes to do so, for the fear of the Lord is so desirable in and of itself.

Be therefore resolved to do so and make it your great endeavor; you will learn from being thus engaged. And since we are too corrupt, turn therefore to the Lord, praying, “Unite my heart to fear Thy name” (Ps 86:11). Make yourself familiar with the Word of God; it is a means whereby you may fear the Lord. “He shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God” (Deut 17:19). May the Lord bless these words. “Fear God, and give glory to Him” (Rev 14:7). Amen.

CHAPTER SIXTY

Obedience Toward God

The word obedience is a derivative from a word which means “to hear”—which is also true in the Greek and Hebrew languages. “To hear” frequently means “*to obey*,” “to listen to a voice,” “to be pleased with a command and to execute it.”

Obedience is the willing subjection of God’s child to God, as Lord and Father in Christ, in order to comply with His commands.

The Object and Subjects of Obedience

The object is God. All that obligates us to obedience and all that can incite us thereto is to be found in God. He is the First, and the One who alone is majestic, glorious, and holy. He is the Creator from whom man originates and through whom he exists in his motions. He is the One who is worthy to be obeyed and the only lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Every man is obligated toward obedience by virtue of the nature of God and of his own position relative to Him. That obligation is upon everyone and is acknowledged and subscribed to by everyone—even by the heathen. God requires it from His people in Scripture. This is not so because God has need to be served by man’s hands, but because He is worthy, human nature mandates it, and it constitutes the well-being and felicity of man. It is a manifestation of God’s goodness that He wills something in reference to man, issues him a command, and wishes man to do something toward Him. On the other hand, if God reveals Himself to man and causes him to behold His perfections, man cannot but subject himself to God with delight. Man needs no other reason nor any other incentive for obedience except that God is God. God is to be viewed here both as *Lord and as Father in Christ*. As Lord, as possessor, and as

the most eminent One, He was the object of Adam's obedience prior to the fall. After the fall, however, God is to be viewed not only as Lord to His people—that is, *Jehovah* who is, who was, and who shall be—but also as their Father in Christ, so that both reverence unto God as Lord and love to Him as Father coalesce. “Obey the voice of the Lord *your God*” (Jer 26:13).

The subjects are the children of God. Christ is involved in every aspect of the covenant of grace; hence everything must transpire by faith in Christ. God does not want to be served by His enemies—even if it were in a manner becoming to Him. In order to serve God there must *first* be reconciliation, which alone is accomplished through Christ and applied by faith. That faith is active in serving God as a reconciled Father in filial love. The law is not a burden to God's children but a delight; it is not a condition of the covenant of works, but a loving rule to prevent error. The partakers of the covenant are here not to be viewed as slaves who, for fear of being beaten, are compelled to work, but as children whose delight it is to obey their Father. The unconverted do not know God in that relationship, and even if they do something which God commands, they do not do so in the manner enjoined and with the required objective. Furthermore, they have no desire to obey God; they are neither willing, nor do they engage themselves to do so. God reveals Himself to His children, however, as the One who is worthy to be obeyed. He grants them faith to come to Him through Christ, as children to their father. He gives them both filial love toward as well as fear for Him, so that they only are the suitable subjects to render obedience to the Lord. This obedience is therefore referred to as *the obedience of faith* (Rom 1:15), and believers are called *obedient children* (1 Pet 1:14).

The Nature, Goal, and Manner of Obedience

The nature of obedience consists in *subjection to God*. Man, by his very nature, has been placed in subjection to God. Adam acknowledged this subjection with delight and joyfully subjected himself to the Lord. However, after the fall man's nature is rebellious toward God. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). However, the man who has been born again and has received a new nature, does not only know and acknowledge the fact that he is naturally subject to God, but he willingly subjects himself to God, renders himself available to Him for service, and says with David, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant” (Ps 116:16). He surrenders himself with his entire heart. “But God be

thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17). This subjection consists:

(1) In an actual knowledge of, and being exercised with, the majesty and other perfections of God which are worthy of the rendering of obedience. The obedient person reflects upon them and continues to focus upon them with his thoughts. He thus acknowledges that God is truly worthy to be obeyed by all creatures.

(2) In delight and joy that God is worthy of all service and obedience. He cannot get enough of observing, acquiescing in, or rejoicing in this.

(3) In acknowledging the relationship in which all men are toward God as Creator and creature respectively, who in every respect—without exception—are dependent upon God. As far as the believer himself is concerned, he not only acknowledges the obligation which devolves upon him as creature, but he also views himself as being in a Father/child relationship in Christ. He thus lovingly perceives how becoming it is to obey this majestic Lord and benevolent Father, so that his affections are ardently inclined toward obedience.

(4) In an actual subjection, surrender, and offering of oneself to the service of the Lord. This is not an activity which subsides, but this act is repeated time and again, and is renewed on every occasion. He thus acquires a propensity and a submissive disposition, from which all actions proceed time and again—and thus “his deeds ... are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

The goal of submission is the carrying out of the Lord’s command. This sovereign Lord and Father in Christ also exercises chastisements toward His children which are distasteful to nature and are unpleasant when they are being inflicted. A child of God must not respond rebelliously to this; he must neither be sorrowful, murmur, stubbornly resist and harden himself against this, nor avoid the cross, and go astray by sinning. Rather, also in this respect he must have a pliable, submissive, and obedient heart, saying, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him” (Mic 7:9). We shall discuss this under the subject of *patience*; here our focus is upon submission in doing His will.

The Lord is also King, the Lord is lawgiver, and the Lord makes His will known to His children. He teaches them His precepts, all of which are included in the ten commandments. It is His will that they walk according to this rule, without either deleting or adding something. These commandments contain *all matters* which are either to be performed or abstained from, *the manner* in which all

these are to be adhered to, and *the goal* which is both the motive and the objective for the performance of or the abstinence from everything. There is no room here for human institutions or personal opinions. The obedient person commits Himself to the performance of these commandments. It is not sufficient for him to have an internal love and desire for this, but he also wants to perform them as commandments of the Lord, and because they are *His* commandments. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always. O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! ... Teach me Thy statutes, etc” (Ps 119:11, 111-112, 5, 26).

The manner of obedience consists in willingness; obedience is a willing subjection. It neither grieves the obedient person nor is it a grievous burden to him that he is subject to God even in a natural sense. He would never desire not to be subject to God—yes, even if he were free and it were his choice whether to be subject and obedient to God, he would out of love subject Himself and fully surrender himself to God in order to be obedient to the Lord in all things. He therefore willingly embraces his subjection and is determined to obey the Lord on a completely volitional basis. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isa 1:19).

This willing disposition consists in

(1) A ready willingness of the heart. “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed”¹⁵ (Ps 57:7); “So, as much as in me is, I am ready” (Rom 1:15).

(2) An offering of oneself for this work. “Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord” (2 Chron 17:16); “Here am I; send me” (Isa 6:8).

(3) An asking for counsel if something needs to be done. “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do” (Acts 9:6).

(4) A listening for an answer: “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2); “I will hear what God the Lord will speak” (Ps 85:8).

(5) The desire and the intent to do whatever is according to the Lord’s wishes and is pleasing to Him. “Wherefore we labour, that we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor 5:9).

(6) Immediately engaging in the duty which one knows that God presently commands. “I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments” (Ps 119:60).

¹⁵ The Statenvertaling reads as follows: “Mijn hart is bereid,” that is, “My heart is ready.”

(7) Finding delight in and loving this duty. “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Ps 119:35); “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments” (Ps 112:1).

(8) Doing the work joyously. “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Thy statutes have been my songs ... for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Ps 119:14, 54, 111).

(9) The zeal and ardor with which the duty is performed. “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps 104:4); “(Be) fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11).

(10) The fearless performance of the duty; that is, fearing neither the loss of honor, goods, relatives, nor life. “And many of the brethren ... speak the word without fear” (Phil 1:14); “For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

(11) Being courageous and bold in the performance of the duty. “For the Lord of hosts ... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded” (Zech 10:3, 5).

(12) The steadfastness, determination, and commitment with which the work is performed. “Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

A Convicting Question: are We Obedient Toward God?

We have thus held before you the nature of obedience. The truth is as a clear mirror to you, revealing whether you are obedient unto God. It is not necessary to prove to you that this is your duty. Man’s nature teaches this sufficiently, the heathen will convince you, and God requires it in Scripture. “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me” (Exod 19:5); “Only rebel not ye against the Lord” (Num 14:9); “Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day” (Deut 27:10). Conclude this to be so and set yourself to it, saying, “I am under obligation and must be obedient to God.” Then ask yourself, “Am I already obedient?” You will be able to answer yourself by reason of what has been said about the nature of obedience.

An unconverted person is not obedient to God. He is also not capable of this for he does not know God, does not come unto God by faith, and his conduct is not motivated by obedience. Therefore,

examine yourself attentively. Do you submit yourself to the Lord? Are you acquainted with the Lord's majesty and His worthiness to be obeyed? Do you know of conscious transactions with Christ as Surety and Mediator, thus to be reconciled with God by His suffering and death, and as a child to serve Him as a Father in filial love? Do you render yourself available to the Lord's service in all things—doing so with a heartfelt willingness? And how do you fare relative to the performance of your duty? Is there consistency, tender carefulness, and zeal? Does all this manifest itself? If you wish to deal uprightly with yourself, you will perceive whether there is true obedience to be found with you.

A Reprimand for the Disobedient

Give ear, all you who are disobedient; I will declare the word of the Lord to you. In order to do this more effectively, it is needful for me to *first* show who the disobedient are, since there is great diversity among them.

First, all of you who do not manifest the nature of obedience as delineated above, all your deeds, however good you may esteem them to be, are but apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah. They are but splendid sins which have an appearance of being good—however, not in truth.

Secondly, there are those who do not even want to hear the voice of the Lord. “Therefore they say unto God (*if not in words, then with the heart and in deeds*), Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him” (Job 21:14-15).

Thirdly, there are those who, while hearing, are not willing to be obedient. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them” (Ezek 33:31).

Fourthly, there are those who have intentions and make promises; however, it comes no further than this and nothing comes of it. “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest” (Matt 8:19); “He answered and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Matt 21:30).

Fifthly, there are those who do something, but only as far as it is consistent with their interests—no more than that. “When he (*Herod*) heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mark 6:20). Saul said, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” (1 Sam 15:13), but in the meantime he had destroyed that which was despicable and had kept the best for himself, the pretense being that he was going to sacrifice it to the Lord.

Sixthly, there are those who only comply in an external sense and make much ado about this. Such compliance, however, is void of internal obedience and faith in Christ. They intend to get to heaven by reason of that activity, and are as the Pharisees who cleanse the external, but allow the internal to remain unclean (Matt 23:27). They are like graves which appear beautiful from the outside, but within are filled with stench and dead bones (Matt 23:27).

Seventhly, there are those who reject obedience, are recalcitrant, rebel, and indulge in sin—be it in secret or in open manifestation of ungodliness. “Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us” (Ps 2:3); “Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you” (Deut 9:24); “For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon Him, even on His neck, upon the thick bosses of His bucklers” (Job 15:25-26).

Eighthly, there are those who are obedient to the devil, the world, and their own lusts. Whatever the devil wills, they do willingly. “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tim 2:26). Whatever the world dictates, they desire likewise. If the world dictates that one adhere to such and such a fashion, they comply immediately. If the world dictates that one use vain language, dance, gamble, and fornicate together with her, they willingly participate. If they are able to gain someone’s favor, no sin is too gross. They fear nothing, except that the world were not to acknowledge them as belonging to her, were to despise them, and perceive them as one of those strict ones. “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). They yield, with delight and with all their heart, to whatever lust arises, and they are thus the servants of sin (Rom 6:17). “(They) do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” (Rom 2:8).

I address the Word of the Lord to you and declare to you your abominable condition as well as the dreadful judgments which will come upon you. May it be a means to your conversion.

First, it is a most abominable condition, for it is a departing from God, a separating yourself from God, and an ignoring of God. Shall a creature, a worm of the dust, and one who is dependent in all things depart from God, the living God, the Fountain of Life, his Maker—that God who is majestic, all-glorious, and most worthy of obedience? Shall he divorce himself from God and reject Him? Yes, disobedience is recalcitrance, rebellion, opposition to God, striving with God, and whatever else one can denominate as evil. “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is

as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam 15:23). It is not a being disobedient to parents, a rebelling against authorities, and a transient sinful deed, but it is a disobedient disposition of the heart—a heart which is averse, resistant, and recalcitrant. If you could observe this disobedience in its true nature, you would be frightened of yourself. Scripture calls such a heart an evil heart, and such persons are regarded as abominable and unto every good work reprobate. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12); “... being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). Oh, that this would sink into your heart!

Secondly, consider furthermore that you are in a condition in which you cannot perform any religious duties. Whatever you do, even your prayer, is an abomination before God. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov 28:9); “Ah sinful nation ... they have forsaken the Lord. ... When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts ... your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you” (Isa 1:4, 12, 14-15). Prayer is the refuge of the destitute; however, your prayer is an abomination. Woe unto you, Oh wretched man!

Thirdly, since you are disobedient toward God, depart from, and are rebellious against Him, God has also departed from you and is therefore also your enemy. You thus belong to the devil. “If ye forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron 15:2); “With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward” (Ps 18:26); “... the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Yes, by reason of this disobedience you are, so to speak, trapped in a prison. You cannot escape it, you are given over to it, and you cannot but be disobedient. “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief” (Rom 11:32). You even stumble over Him in whom alone there is salvation, namely Christ. “... unto them which be disobedient, ... a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1 Pet 2:7-8).

Fourthly, furthermore, take to heart the judgments of God which will come upon you. If you could but perceive what they were, your hair would stand up straight in terror. This God whom you disobey is stronger than you are. As great as His goodness is to the obedient, so great is His hatred and anger against the disobedient. Where will you flee when He will avenge Himself upon you? “The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord hath His way in

the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nah 1:2-3); “Thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by them that are no gods: Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this” (Jer 5:7, 9). Do not imagine to possess either grace or salvation as long as your heart remains in the state of disobedience, for there is neither grace nor salvation for you. Nothing but wrath, curse, and condemnation is reserved for you. Hear and tremble about the declarations which are made toward you. “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth ... indignation and wrath” (Rom 2:8). “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Eph 5:6); “Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant” (Jer 11:3). For the disobedient, nothing remains but eternal destruction. That will be their end, as it was the end of the disobedient *first* world (1 Pet 3:20). Know therefore and consider that it is an evil and bitter thing for you to have forsaken the Lord your God—and if the becoming nature of obedience and the majestic glory of God cannot move you to obedience, then permit the fear for God’s wrath and judgments to do so.

A Reprimand for God’s Children

I will now turn to God’s children to whom the Lord has given an obedient heart. They have the old nature still within them, however, and thus also a principle of disobedience. This frequently exhibits itself strongly and manifests itself in many deeds through *negligence*; that is, neither giving heed to God as Lord nor to God’s command given to them. The Word goes past them and is forgotten; they transgress without noticing it. There can be *carelessness*, as if they were not surrounded by enemies, and before knowing it, they are caught in a snare. If obedience would have more of an effect, they would neither be so careless nor proceed so thoughtlessly. There can be a *resistance toward obedience*. At times disobedience manifests itself in a more powerful and sinful manner. The desire to commit a sin can at times be so strong that the sin breaks through, even when the obedient heart manifests itself, and, while not striving much against it due to weakness, it nevertheless groans under it. It can even go so far that for a long time a believer goes about with a disturbed heart, and cannot come to a lively, earnest, and perfect intention and determination to fully and permanently abstain from that sin. Sometimes it even goes further, so that the will, for a time, seems to dominate. It is as if he is not willing to come to such a resolution. Upon engaging in prayer the sin can

become so lively that the conscience says, “Now you ought to make a complete resolution before the Lord.” The will is silent, and one can even come so far that it is as if he is not willing to pray for strength against this sin and for a complete determination and intention to abstain from it. This is due to the lust being so strong and spiritual life being in a stupor. If he progresses to the point that the entire will has been won over and that he comes to full resolution, praying with the entire heart for strength, then he will yet be unstable, since sin has retained too much of its strength. Not long thereafter he will again fall into the same sin.

This is a very dismal condition, and it reveals that our old nature yet remains inclined toward disobedience. Believers ought to acknowledge, mourn over, and confess their disobedience, and, time and again, restore themselves by faith in Christ. On the other hand, however, they ought to be on guard against unbelief and the rejection of their state, as if they, as others, were entirely concluded under disobedience. They can perceive from that mentioned above that it is in truth with them and that they have an obedient heart. This is manifested by the many motions and deeds of obedience which it brings forth—by the fact that there is a hatred for and displeasure toward the disobedience of the flesh, and that the regenerated man within strives against, groans under, and prays against it.

Engage in all earnest therefore in this battle, for you know:

(1) That the devil, the world, and the flesh are masters which are too despicable than that you, who are of divine origin, are partakers of the divine nature, and are gifted with a princely spirit, should subject yourself in obedience to those foul, despicable, and hateful monstrosities.

(2) That they are hard and cruel taskmasters who never say, “It is enough.” They always demand more. Whether you are weary or no longer find delight in it, you have to yield again when the opportunity is there. They will give you no time to calm down, to think about God and His sweet service, and to be obedient to the Lord in any matter. Rather, they want your entire heart, all the members of your body, and all your time—and even then they are not satisfied.

(3) How detrimental it is for you to be obedient to them! This yields nothing but a restless heart, an anxious conscience, bondage, terror, and fear. It makes life too fearful for you and death too dreadful. “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed” (Rom 6:21); “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11).

An Exhortation to Obedience

Find delight in obeying the Lord. In order to stimulate you to do so, consider thus the preciousness of obedience from every perspective.

First, look unto the Lord. By virtue of being God, He is indeed worthy of all obedience. You acknowledge this with delight, and you have frequently wished with your whole heart that all that exists in both heaven and earth would be subjected to the Lord in obedience. It has indeed grieved you when you observed that God was not obeyed by men. Shall you then not render obedience to this great God, saying, “Behold, here I am. What wilt Thou have me to do?” Furthermore, “Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee” (Deut 32:6). When you did not exist, He created you and made you to be a man. He has given you food and clothing until now, and by His oversight has preserved your breath. He has granted you His own Son, drawn you with lovingkindness, placed you among His children, and chosen you to be His heir. Shall not all this obligate you to obey Him as Lord and as Father, and cause you to say, “Surely, I am Thy servant, surely I am Thy servant”?

Secondly, obedience is a very sweet work. The Lord does not impose a hard service upon His children, nor does He cause them to serve Him with hardness. “His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3); “For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matt 11:30); “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:22); “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them” (Ps 84:5). They are smooth and delightful ways. “Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps 119:165); “It is joy to the just to do judgment” (Prov 21:15). Your own heart chooses this way, and you yourself find delight in it. What Paul says of himself, you say likewise: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). Therefore lift up your heart in the ways of the Lord, embrace the will of God, and incline it toward obedience, for “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov 3:23); “Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble” (Prov 3:23).

Thirdly, the Lord is extraordinarily pleased with an obedient heart, and with the deeds proceeding from such a heart. Even if they are imperfect, in Christ He will overlook the deficiency. David was a man after the Lord’s heart by reason of having such an obedient heart. He stumbled many times—yes, even fell deeply—and yet the Lord says concerning him, “Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside

from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5). No work—however holy it may be in and of itself—can please God if it does not proceed from an obedient heart; God demands the heart. Yes, even we demand the heart of those who serve us; only then do we delight in their service. If there is an obedient heart, God will then be pleased with our work. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam 15:22). God delights in sacrifice, for it is written concerning Noah’s sacrifice, “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour” (Gen 8:21). If, however, we place sacrifice and obedience side by side, then God is more pleased with obedience. A righteous child delights to please his father, and thus it is also with you: delight yourself in rendering to the Lord a service pleasing to Him. You will do so in the way of obedience. Shall the Lord fulfill your desire (Ps 145:19), and should you then not fulfil His desire?

Fourthly, it is, furthermore, not in vain to serve the Lord. Let that be the opinion of the ungodly who obey God in an external sense to obtain temporal blessings. If they do not obtain them, then with sorrow they leave the service of the Lord. Upright ones, you know, however, that the Lord is a good and benevolent God who richly rewards His faithful servants. “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain” (Isa 45:19); “Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought” (Mal 1:10). God promises all manner of temporal blessings to the obedient: “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isa 1:19). Yes, obedience has the promise of salvation in Christ. “And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb 5:9). Even though the benefits are not the basis for obedience, we must nevertheless be stimulated by them. Moses “had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb 11:26).

Fifthly, the examples of others are suitable to stir us up; therefore take note of the examples of the obedient. *The Lord Jesus* is the most perfect example of obedience. He has left us an example, so that we would walk in His footsteps. He, the servant of the Lord, “humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:8). *The holy angels* are obedient servants of the Lord. “Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Ps 103:20). *The saints* upon earth are examples for us; obedience was their delight and activity. Noah was obedient to the Lord in all things. Even though the entire world mocked him when building the ark, he heeded the Lord’s command. Abraham—the

father of the faithful, whose footsteps we must follow—how obedient he was! He did all that God said and went wherever God sent Him. He obeyed blindly and left everything, went out not knowing whither he went, and did not spare his son. Moses is generally denominated as the servant of God. “My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house” (Num 12:7). The measure of David’s obedience toward the Lord is abundantly conveyed by the history of his life recorded in the books of Samuel and in his Psalms—particularly Ps 119. If mention is made of a godly person elsewhere in the Word, you will at once observe his obedience. Focus upon the godly, be desirous to walk in obedience as they did, and together with them you will glorify God in your life and be glorified of God—both here and in eternity. May the Lord incline your heart toward His precepts, so that you may serve Him with a willing soul. I conclude with David’s exhortation to his son Solomon, “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind” (1 Chron 28:9).

 CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Hope in God

God gives His children great and glorious promises, but He does not always fulfil them immediately. He postpones at times the fulfillment and occasionally allows many difficulties to come between in order to test their faith. Nevertheless, to be able to proceed courageously, *hope* is needed, and this we shall now discuss. *Hope* is expressed in Hebrew by the words: ηωθτ (*tikvah*), τληωτ (*tocheleth*), ρβ# (*sebbber*), all of which mean “expectation,” and are translated by the word “hope.” There is also ηλσκ, λσκ (*kislah, kesel*) because the foolish world hopes without foundation, and ridicules the expectation of the godly. Furthermore, there is Νζημβ (*bittachōn*), which is expressive of trust without fear. In Greek the word is εθλπ/ω (*elpis*) which signifies: to build upon faith, to be free of anxiety, to anticipate with certainty. Occasionally it signifies the matter hoped for; here it signifies the motion of the heart.

Hope is a propensity infused by God into the hearts of believers by means of the Word, whereby they patiently, actively, and with assurance anticipate future promised benefits.

Hope is a *propensity*. Propensities are generally distinguished as being either acquired or infused. *Acquired* propensities complement either the intellect, the will, or actions, thus enabling one to engage in artistic activity. These skills are acquired by way of much exercise. The *infused* propensities are faith, hope, love, etc. Man, due to his blindness, evil disposition, and impotence, cannot acquire these by his own activity; rather, they are infused into the soul by God. Having been infused, they, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, are improved by way of many exercises. God does not infuse them repeatedly with every act, implying that man would time and again be destitute. Rather, when God makes the soul

spiritually alive, He gives her a virtuous disposition and the competence to be spiritually active. By reason of this competence the regenerated man, by the coinciding operation of the Holy Spirit who must continually influence him, brings forth various virtues. Such is also true for hope, for it is not a transitory act, but rather a propensity—a disposition of spiritual competence from which deeds proceed.

The Nature of Hope

The nature of hope consists in a *sure expectation*. Hope is not the equivalent of possession; whatever one possesses, one cannot hope for. “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for” (Rom 8:25). Hope expects and anticipates that which has not been observed as yet, is not yet present, but which is yet to come. “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:25). The apostle therefore conjoins expecting and hoping—the latter explaining the former. “According to my earnest expectation and my hope ...” (Phil 1:20).

Hope is a sure expectation. It is not a wish such as, “I wish I had this and that”—as Baalam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” (Num 23:10). Such is the hope of the unconverted. They are neither partakers of the promise nor of the matter, and yet they say, “I hope to be saved.” Thus, their hope is but a wish which shall come to naught. “When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth” (Prov 11:7). It also does not consist in doubting and vacillating between hope and fear, issuing forth from whether it is probable that the desired matter be attained. This vacillation does not constitute hope; instead, there is *certainty* in hope. I repeat, there is certainty in hope, but not in the ones who exercise hope, for everything is imperfect in believers. As far as hope in man is concerned, there can be no complete certainty, since man can be or become untruthful, changeable, and impotent. This cannot be applicable, however, to hope in God, since He is true, immutable, and omnipotent. If He promises something absolutely, has no condition contingent upon man, there can be no doubt in hope. However, when it comes to faith, those who exercise hope are weak in all respects. Therefore, there is also weakness in hope, as is to be observed in the disciples who travelled to Emmaus. “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the *third* day since these things were done” (Luke 24:21). This does not, however, remove the certainty in hope, and a believer is obligated to strive for the full assurance of hope. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure

and steadfast” (Heb 6:19); “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22); “Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13). Hope is thus a sure expectation.

The object of hope consists in the promised or future benefits. God Himself is the supreme good and the complete felicity of man. In the covenant, God promises Himself to believers and God is thus the object of hope. God is, however, also the Promiser and Giver of all salvation to His children, and He is thus once more the object of hope. Those who exercise hope look to Him, expect from Him, and rest in Him as the One who is good, true, immutable, and omnipotent. “Hope thou in God” (Ps 42:5); “And have hope toward God” (Acts 24:15). He is therefore called “the hope of Israel” (Jer 14:8). “For Thou art my hope, O Lord God” (Ps 71:5). Hope expects *benefits* from God. These benefits are either temporal, spiritual, or eternal in nature. Hope is also exercised relative to temporal benefits, for God has also promised *temporal benefits*—this referring in a general sense to all that they stand in need of to serve Him according to His purpose in this life. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5); “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13). A believer may and must take hold of this promise, let go of all fear, and expect its fulfillment with certainty.

Question Man comes into many situations in which his temporal welfare is contingent upon the outcome of such situations. This engenders a desire that he may succeed according to his objective, as well as a fear for an evil outcome. How must he conduct himself as far as hope is concerned?

Answer: Both the desire and the fear are natural; he must not suppress them, but rather sanctify them. He must hope in God’s general promise of help and care, securely and quietly rely upon this, and expect its fulfillment with certainty. If he intends to involve himself in a matter which is pleasing to God, and he deals with it in a manner enjoined by God, he will thus have freedom to ask God for a good result and make his desire known to God by prayer and supplication. In the use of the means there will be a lively sense of dependence upon God and an encouragement regarding the outcome, leaning toward that which is desired. This is particularly true if God gives him a special measure of freedom in believing and earnestness in prayer—and if, while trusting in and enjoying the nearness of God, he may use the means in the strength of God. This also occurs if God manifests Himself in an

extraordinary manner and gives him a strong confidence that the matter will have such a desired outcome. I repeat, this is so when God does this, rather than he himself; that is, by being encouraged by either the probable outcome, or by the grace enabling him to pray and to be dependent upon God. It is then that the matter could miscarry. Since, however, we do not have specific promises for specific temporal circumstances, we can also not expect to have a certain expectation that, apart from an extraordinary revelation of God, this specific matter will have the outcome aimed for and desired. We can, however, be sure of this: Regardless of what the outcome may be, it will be blessed and be to our best advantage. If it turns out according to our desire, it will be a blessing. If it turns out differently, it will be much more advantageous and blessed than if our objective had been achieved. For, relative to God's children, all things must work together for good (Rom 8:28). We must see to it that we are not bent on having our way—as if we could not be blessed unless we would receive precisely that matter. We must be active to deny our own desire, to acquiesce in the wisdom and goodness of God, and to be satisfied with and delight in the general promises of God: *He careth for thee; He will make it well; He will not forsake you.* If God acts according to our wishes, this will cause joyous gratitude; if not, we must be satisfied with the will of God, learn to esteem that which is of the world as being of no value, and learn to live out of the hand of God. Be therefore on guard against unbelief and fretfulness. This is how we are to conduct ourselves in poverty, persecution, and other prosperities or adversities.

The exercise of hope also pertains to *spiritual benefits*. Sometimes a believer experiences spiritual desertion, darkness, and strife, or is in bondage to a corrupt inclination. At other times he has a strong desire for the assurance of his salvation, for extraordinary comfort, or for sanctification (be it in a general sense or relative to a specific virtue). Here he must conduct himself in like manner as with temporal circumstances (which have just been dealt with). Also here general promises are applicable. “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God” (Ps 92:13); “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6); “If ye shall ask any thing in My Name, I will do it” (John 14:14). In response to this general promise the believer must also entertain a general hope and assuredly expect its fulfillment. Since, however, the Lord has promised neither the time, measure, nor manner of fulfillment, a believer cannot entertain

a specific and certain expectation about this. The general promise is sufficient for him to heighten his desire, to stir him up to prayer, to strive sufficiently (doing so with the hope and certain expectation that the Lord will hear and give), and that the Lord will preserve his faith, sanctify him, and guide him with His counsel. He must deny himself as to the measure of its fulfilment.

The Objects of Hope

Hope has as one of its objects *eternal felicity*. Hope is a “hope of salvation” (1 Thess 5:8); “The hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (Col 1:5); “... hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2); and the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2). All that is of this world is transitory and to be esteemed of little value, but that which is eternal is everything. If eternity weighs down upon the heart, and man considers himself as having to depart from here either into glory or eternally to be in a place of horror, he will shake and tremble. He cannot be at peace unless he is assured of his eternal felicity. God promises this to believers and they must hold this before them as the goal to be attained, and therefore strive and reach out for it. Since God promises salvation, they must hope for, anticipate, and expect it with assurance. That will engender comfort and a zeal for godliness.

Hope focuses upon *promised benefits*. Where there is no promise there can also be no hope; and if there are promises, there can likewise be no hope unless these promises have been made unto us. Only believers are heirs of the promise and therefore they alone are able to hope. When Scripture therefore speaks of hope, it simultaneously speaks of promises, and is thus called “the hope of the promise” (Acts 26:6); “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). The heathen are therefore said to be *without hope*, due to being “strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12).

Hope focuses upon *future benefits*. Faith and hope both ascertain the reality of a matter. Faith focuses upon future benefits as much as hope does. They differ, however, in that faith represents these future benefits as if they are a present reality. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Hope, however, postpones the matter and considers it as yet having to come to pass. “Not as though I had already attained ... but I follow after ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12, 14). The person who exercises hope says, “It is true; I do not have it as yet, but I shall have it.” He does not say, “Maybe,” nor, “There is a good

probability,” but rather, “It is certain and infallibly true. It cannot miscarry; it is definite; I shall have it. I commit myself to this with such certainty as if I already had it. I adjust my conduct accordingly, for I am counting on it and I proceed in reliance upon this.” So much about the object of hope.

To the object of hope we join the *subjects* of hope—who are the children of God. An unconverted person has no basis for hope, since there is no promise for him whatsoever. Furthermore, being dead, he can also not bring forth the deeds of life. To have hope is the privilege of God’s children only. In regeneration they have received life and thus also the ability to exercise hope. “... which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1 Pet 1:3). The promises are made to them only, and therefore they alone have a basis for hope. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: ... to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:17-18). Hope is therefore called “the hope of the righteous” (Prov 10:28; Gal 5:5). They only hope, and they only are exhorted to hope. “I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. Let Israel hope in the Lord” (Ps 130:5, 7). It is grievous that they who may and are able to hope do not more frequently engage therein.

The Cause and Means of the Exercise of Hope

The cause of the exercise of hope is God alone. God promises the matters: “And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25). God gives the matter which is hoped for and has been promised: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (2 Tim 4:8). God infuses into them the ability to hope and in actuality causes them to hope. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom 15:13); “God, even our Father, which ... hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16).

The means is the Word. In the Word, God presents the matter in its beauty and preciousness. In the Word, He presents the Mediator by whom the promised matters have been merited, and by the Word God works faith in the Savior—and by faith hope is wrought in us.

All blessings contained in the promises are founded upon and confirmed in Christ, who, by His blood, has removed the partition

between God and man, and who, by His merits, has merited salvation for the elect. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen” (2 Cor 1:20). A believer, hoping upon the promise, focuses his eye upon the Lord Jesus in order to attain the fulfillment through Him. The Lord Jesus is therefore called “our hope,” “... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). And He is designated to be the object of our hope. “Remembering ... your ... patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1:3); “...Jesus Christ, which is our hope” (1 Tim 1:1).

No one becomes a partaker of Christ—and thus also not of the benefits of the covenant—except by faith. Faith, being exercised toward Christ by receiving Him and claiming Him as one’s own, views the promised benefits as being his own. Thus, hope proceeds from faith, expecting the receipt of the benefits as being one’s own, and that these benefits will be most certainly given to him at the appropriate time. In that respect faith is the foundation of hope. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1); “... with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

Since the Word of God reveals Christ, is the means unto faith, and presents all the glorious benefits which are promised, the Word is the means unto hope. Hope is therefore called “the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23). Observe this also in Ps 119:49, 81: “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. ... I hope in Thy word.”

Patience: The Adjunct and Result of Hope

Hope has as its *adjunct* patience. There is much time, much cross-bearing, and much strife between promise and possession. Then hope comes and shows the glory of the benefits and the certainty of becoming a partaker of them. This is followed by patience, which supports hope so that it does not succumb due to tribulations, the latter being the way in which God leads to the possession of the promised matter. Since there is no other way, and since we must either let go of the benefits and forego them, or along with the end must simultaneously choose the way, hope becomes thereby a *patient expectation*. The believer commits himself to bearing it, wishes to bear it, and bears it willingly and with a quiet heart, for the glory and certainty of the benefits infinitely make up for this. The Lord Jesus has thus gone before, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2). Therefore we also must “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). The apostle therefore says

in Rom 8:25, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,” and he also speaks of a “patience of hope” (1 Thess 1:3).

The *result* of hope is holy industry. Hope neither causes us to be inactive nor will it tolerate occupation with other things; instead, it engenders holy industry to attain the end in the right way. The end in view causes us to be active and to take the means in hand. God, who has promised to give the end, leads His children to this end by means of holy industry. He causes them to forsake the world, focus upon heaven, and lay aside all burdens and the sins which so easily beset them. They thus courageously overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way and hinder them. He causes them to walk in the way of His commandments and to seek glory, honor, and immortality by persevering in well-doing. This is conveyed by the following exhortations: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24); “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).

A Call to Serious Self-Examination

Having considered the nature of hope, you must now turn to yourself and observe whether this hope is to be found in you. You need no other mirror to be made acquainted with yourself than the truth itself. You will agree with me that the person for whom all hope of ever being saved is cut off is most wretched indeed.

Evasive Argument: I am not in that condition as yet; I still have a good hope of being saved.

Answer: It is indeed true that an unconverted person—yes, even the most ungodly person—is not yet cut off from the hope of being saved. This is not so because he can expect any salvation as long as he remains this way, but because he lives under the gospel ministry and does not know whether or not God will yet convert him at a given time. This is, however, not the matter which is currently under discussion. The question is: What do you say concerning yourself? Do you have reason to expect salvation, and do you exercise this hope in actuality? You, unconverted one, may perhaps say, “I know that I have a hope upon eternal life.” I will ask a further question: “Is your hope a good hope? Is there a basis for your hope, and do you hope in truth? Is not your hope but an illusion? Is it more than the wish of a Balaam?” There is a hope which deceives and makes ashamed. Is it not then a matter of the utmost importance for you to search out carefully if your hope is

also a true hope upon which salvation ensues, or whether it is nothing but deceit?

Evasive Argument: I am most satisfied with my hope; leave me alone. I will not allow my hope to be taken away.

Answer: Good gold can endure examination and good work does not shun the light. If you do not want others to know what your condition is, endeavor nevertheless to ascertain it for yourself. To that end read what I have to say in quietness and solitude. If your hope is good, then I do not wish to take it away from you. If, however, it is a deceitful hope, it is time for you to awake while there is yet time. Answer for yourself the following questions:

First of all, are faith in Christ, reconciliation with God (and the sense of this), the despising of the world (and all that pertains to it), the denial of your own lusts, the love of God, a sanctified life, and felicity after this life your portion and are they precious to you? Are you acquainted with them, do you recognize yourself in them, do you long for them, is it your objective, and do you reach forth unto them in order that you might attain them? Upon finding promises in the Word of God, you will find qualifications conjoined to them, indicating to whom the promises are made. Do you have these qualifications, so that you may perceive that these promises are made to you? Do you approach God with them as the One who is true and omnipotent, and do you rest with them in the promising God? Do you expect the receipt of these benefits, are you intent upon them, and do you strive for them with all that is in you? Are you opposed to all that hinders you and do you overcome these obstacles? Do you endure everything to that end, reach forth to it, seek to apprehend it, and does it sanctify you? How does your heart respond? If you are inwardly convinced that these things are not to be found in you, you do not have this hope, and your insistence that you nevertheless have this hope is nothing but deceit. Your hope will truly be deceived if you die in this condition.

Secondly, answer once again: Are not your anticipation, your expectation, your hope, and your rest related to men? Do you not expect it from that gentleman or that friend who will help you, expecting it now to go well? Do you not—in your heart—end in them, their presence, their favor, and their power? Do you not put your trust in money and belongings, and endeavor to find rest in the pursuance of them? Are you not encouraged when you have them and does this not remove your fear? Are you relying upon your skills, your deftness, and your strength? If you cannot find help or rest anywhere, do you then not fix your hope upon a change of season, reasoning that you cannot help this, but that it

has to be this way, and that therefore you will exercise patience? If your heart responds affirmatively and acquiesces that this is an accurate representation of your condition, then be assured that you are without hope in God and upon salvation, for these are contradictory to each other and cannot go hand in hand.

Thirdly, answer once more: You have a hope of being saved. But do you have a basis for this hope, or is it only because you would like to be in heaven when you can no longer bear it here, since it is better there than to be in hell? Is it because your own spirit testifies that you will indeed be saved and does that put you at ease? Or is it because you are baptized, faithfully attend church, partake of the Lord's Supper, pray to God, give alms, and lead a life beyond reproach? If your heart responds that such is the case, I say to you that you have no basis for your hope and that no promises are made to such persons. Your hope is vain.

You, therefore, having been convinced by a threefold variety of questions that you do not have a true hope, consider how wretched you are, for there is not a single promise to be found for you in the Bible—there is not one whereby you can comfort yourself. Rather, all the threatenings and curses recorded in the Word of God are applicable to you. They will become a reality for you if you do not repent. Hear for a moment what the Lord says concerning your hope. “The hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web” (Job 8:13-14). It is indeed woven together, but it is the weakest structure there is. When removed by either the wind or a mop, it lies there—fully undone. “But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost” (Job 11:20). What will it avail you that you have deceived yourself with an imaginary hope if you find yourself to be excluded? Therefore, awake and repent!

The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted

The godly are also to be rebuked for the feebleness with which they exercise hope. For they have reason to hope, and the principle of hope is already within them—something they ought to be convinced of in answering the three questions presented above. Yes, it is a great error that they are more engaged in striving against their hope than to stir it up—as if they had only then accomplished something when saying, “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord” (Lam 3:18). All promises have been made to you. Why do you not acknowledge this to be so, being judgmentally convinced that it is true within—the Word of God

being the judge here? How is it possible that the heirs of the promises have so little dealings with them, and so rarely strive for possession of, hope in, and longingly and joyfully expect the fulfillment of the promises?

There are matters which prevent them from doing so.

(1) The promised matters are frequently obscure, so that they cannot perceive the glory and beauty of them. This impedes the longing for them. This is generally caused when the contemplation and a continual focus upon these matters are neglected.

(2) There is the commission of sins, in consequence of which they doubt their spiritual state and are fearful of not being a partaker of Christ and all His benefits.

(3) They are overwhelmed by the grievousness and the long duration of the cross. This causes their soul to be cast down (Ps 42:6).

(4) Historical faith is under attack, or it is too weak to ascertain matters with certainty and infallibility as to their clarity and veracity.

By all these the godly are thus prevented from being exercised in hope. I maintain, however, that these ought not to hinder them. They ought to labor with the little grace they have, and submit to their judgment as having been convinced of it. For to neglect the exercise of hope will confuse them more and more, rob them of their strength, and cause them to sink down in listlessness and discouragement—yes, to sink away in despondency. They dishonor God in His goodness, truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence, and give the devil the opportunity to toss them back and forth. And rest assured that you will not prevail effortlessly here. One overcomes by way of striving, and the more a person exercises hope, the more earnest he shall be in his endeavor. Therefore do not yield to hopelessness—even if your heart is not sensibly desirous for spiritual benefits, does not find any sweetness in the exercise of hope, and your unbelieving heart vehemently opposes this. Proceed then with your judgmental perception that you are a partaker of the promises. You will then perceive that hope will be quickened within you.

Therefore, lethargic soul, lift up your heart, for felicity is not to be found here below. “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come” (Isa 45:24). Consider the help of the Lord to be a certainty in all temporal and spiritual matters. Establish your salvation as being certain and immovably steadfast because He who has promised is faithful. Speak as follows: “I shall be helped. The Lord shall most certainly lead me by His counsel and take me into glory.” Rejoice in your blessedness and in that great salvation that has been promised you. Count on

it and embark upon the way which leads to it. Endure all things and do not succumb to anything—it will yet all work together for good. Anticipate felicity, fully hope in it, and overcome all obstacles with a steadfast and brave heart. Everything will have to surrender to you, and the outcome will not fail. You will gain the upper hand, inherit the crown of life, and receive the end of faith, for:

First, the benefits which are the object of your hope are so precious and attractive that it will kindle the desires of all who reflect upon them attentively. To be cared for by God in this life and thus to be without care as to the outcome of a given matter is glorious and most desirable. Then we are dependent upon God in our activity and know that the outcome (whatever it may be) will be for the best, yes, anticipate grace, light, comfort, and sanctification in this life, and blessed fellowship with God hereafter. God has promised these matters to you, however, and you will be partakers of them. Are not these matters worthy to be desired by you, to be expected in hope, to be striven for, and should not your conduct be governed accordingly?

Secondly, the promises pertaining to these matters are certain. God will neither change, nor will any creature rob you of them, for they rest upon:

(1) God's truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence. "... for He is faithful that promised" (Heb 10:23); "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa 26:3); "... neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord" (Isa 54:10).

(2) Christ as upon a certain and immovable foundation. "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (1 Pet 2:6). Could that which Christ has merited miscarry?

(3) The Word of which the Lord Jesus says, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17); "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor 1:20).

(4) The eternal and immutable testament confirmed in the death of the Testator (Heb 9:15-17). "And I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luke 22:29).

(5) Eternal love. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). Those whom He has foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified, He will also glorify (Rom 8:29-30).

(6) The oath of God. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that ... we might have a strong consolation" (Heb 6:17-18).

(7) The given earnest which is worth infinitely more than the promised matter itself. "... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:13-14).

(8) Fellowship with Christ. Since He is the head and already is in heaven, the members will most certainly follow. "And hath ... made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Therefore the apostle says, "For we are saved by hope" (Rom 8:24). Who will refuse to depend upon such a certain assurance?

Thirdly, hope is a strong consolation in cross-bearing, and in all the tribulations of this life; in all things it causes the focus to be upon the promised benefits. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess 4:17-18). The person who exercises hope will adduce the following proof: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18). Hope perceives the profit of tribulations and the glory which will follow it. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).

Fourthly, hope will cause the believer to battle courageously, for it ascertains the certainty of the victory. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air" (1 Cor 9:26); "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God ... therefore we are always confident" (2 Cor 5:5-6).

Fifthly, hope rejoices the heart; man cannot live without happiness. However, in the world the godly endure many tribulations, and if they had nothing but tribulation they would succumb. All that man strives for is related to happiness, for a joyful heart begets strength for soul and body. Hope, however, causes the believer to "glory in tribulations" (Rom 5:3), and there is thus a "rejoicing in hope" (Rom 12:12).

Sixthly, hope sanctifies the soul. The imagination and the wish leave the work undone, but a sure hope stimulates activity. Since the matters hoped for are spiritual and holy, they thus also sanctify the person exercising hope. This is all the more so since the way in which God leads His children to glory is the way of holiness. This is to be observed in 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Hope in and of itself is precious, and it is furthermore precious since it engenders courage, joy, and holiness.

Seventhly, in addition to all—this being the most eminent

virtue—hope glorifies God and the Lord Jesus. It acknowledges God's sovereignty in either accepting or bypassing a sinful person; God's free grace to grant such a one salvation in spite of his sins; His truth, immutability, and faithfulness; the fact that He keeps His word and will most certainly fulfil His promises; His omnipotence in preserving them unto salvation in spite of all their enemies, as well as in granting it to them; and the love of God and of the Lord Jesus to give Himself as a Surety and in meriting salvation for His own by virtue of His satisfaction.

Therefore, all who desire to glorify God, be active to exercise hope continually. Be continually engaged in seeking for all manner of promises in the Word of God, appropriating them to yourself, and relying upon them. Do not cease to pray that the Lord may cause you to hope. Stir up others, and let the exhortation of others to hope steadfastly, find entrance into your hearts. While you are thus engaged, you will experience that your hope will not make you ashamed, but that you, upon patiently anticipating their fulfillment, will most certainly become a partaker of these blessings at the appointed time.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

Spiritual Strength or Courage

Not only does much time elapse between the promise and the possession of the matter which hope assuredly anticipates, but also much opposition from enemies is to be expected. Therefore, the person who exercises hope needs to be valiant in order to endure all things and overcome all obstacles. We thus add to hope *spiritual strength or courage*.

Spiritual strength is an undaunted steadfastness of heart, given by God to His children, whereby they, while entertaining a lively hope of acquiring the promised benefits, overcome fear for all danger and opposition, unyieldingly engage in warfare, and courageously persevere in obedience toward God.

The following is a true proverb: *Ardua quae pulchra*, or, *eminent matters are difficult to be obtained*. This is true in both natural and spiritual matters. Those spiritual matters to be acquired are most eminent. He who is not acquainted with them, however, will neither trouble himself about them, nor risk any danger for them; but he who is acquainted with them will risk everything for them and will fortify his heart with hope. This fortitude, even though the world designates it as being stubborn and strong-willed, is nevertheless *an eminent virtue*. It is an ornament for the Christian which is pleasing to God, dreadful to the world, and personally beneficial. It is a virtue which God requires and to which believers are frequently exhorted, namely, "Be strong."

The seat of spiritual strength is to be found in the soul, intellect, will, and affections of the believer. All of these are fully engaged relative to the objects at hand. It is not a physical activity (even though this is also essential in the execution of this strength), but rather an activity of the soul. It is not merely an activity of the

intellect, observing this virtue in its beauty, but all faculties are active. It is not an activity which is occasionally engaged in, but rather it is a *propensity*, a habitual disposition and competence, which initially is infused by God, but which is exercised by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by much exercise improves and becomes stronger. “His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid” (Ps 112:7-8). The heart of the unconverted is not the subject of this strength, for they are unto all good work reprobate (Titus 1:16). They have no promise, no faith, no hope, nor internal spiritual life. What spiritual strength and courage could they then have? Only the regenerate are the courageous ones and they have what we have just mentioned—something which the unconverted do not have. All “the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov 28:1). To those who are called to be *saints* the apostle says, “Quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13).

Both object and goal are identical here. Spiritual strength relates to the good that is to be acquired and the evil that is to be overcome. God promises many benefits to His own according to body and soul, doing so, however, upon the condition that they will be acquired via the means commanded and ordained by God. The spiritually valiant person is acquainted with them, loves them, believes the promises, and anticipates them in hope. With this perspective he initiates his endeavor, follows after it, and seeks to apprehend it. In this work much resistance is encountered: loss of honor, possessions, and even life. One will encounter shame, contempt, ridicule, hatred, opposition from every perspective, poverty, illness, and all manner of adversity. All of that has the potential to engender fear, and through fear to cause either full or partial cessation of the endeavor. Spiritual courage will not yield, however, but will persevere all the more vehemently. It cannot be moved by anything; it does not even count life dear (Acts 20:24). While thus engaged, the soul may suffer from spiritual desertion and strife. Faith may be assaulted, and hope both shaken and tossed to and fro, so that the inner turmoil is frequently overwhelming. The courageous person, however, proceeds as if blind, does not succumb, keeps courage, and battles as a courageous hero, defending himself and inflicting injury to the enemies. However, an additional evil arises—an evil which has a more far-reaching effect than the previous evil: the old Adam. It flatters, entices, and causes the person to go astray. Here he stumbles, there he falls, then he receives a grievous wound and then again a deadly wound in his soul. That which is good is neglected, the evil is committed, and this is able to make a spiritual soldier unbelieving

concerning his state, and cause him to feel hopeless and become discouraged. However, spiritual strength looks beyond that as well. If the believer cannot remain upright with his burden, he will crawl with it, and if he succumbs to it, he will rise again and renew the battle with new courage. If he cannot see his way through, he believes in and relies upon the Lord Jesus, commends the outcome to Him, and is determined to persevere, regardless of what the cost may be. If the enemy is too strong and he is overcome, he will nevertheless do his best and not surrender—he who is put to the worst in the battle is also fighting. Thus, both good and evil are the objects of the activity of spiritual strength.

The Essence of Spiritual Strength

The integral essence of spiritual strength consists in *a valiant steadfastness of heart*. This in turn consists, *first* of all, in there being *a lively hope*. The benefits hoped for are so desirable that they can endure all that is uncomfortable. Hope in the faithfulness and truthfulness of the promising God makes acquisition such a steadfast and unquestionable fact, that the stronger the believer is in this respect, the stronger his courage will be.

Secondly, it consists in *victory over fear*. Nature shrinks back from suffering and seeks to avoid it. The courageous person conquers fear, however, for he sees that there is no other way to obtain the desired benefits, while at the same time he realizes that everything which is in opposition has no power to conquer him and prevent him from reaching his objective, omnipotent help being on his side. Thus, fear disappears. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid” (Ps 27:1); “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” (Ps 23:4).

Thirdly, it consists in *perseverance in the performance of one’s duty*. This consists in a courageous entering upon the way which leads to the possession of the benefits hoped for, while awaiting all that may be encountered. Thus, such a person proceeds, in dependence upon God and Christ and relying upon His help.

These three matters constitute valiant steadfastness of heart, or spiritual courage. Observe this disposition in the following passages: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life ... nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ

Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35, 37-39); “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

The Origin of Spiritual Strength

The origin of this strength is God. “He shall strengthen your heart” (Ps 31:24); “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29).

This necessitates a closer examination to ascertain how God is operative in this respect, and how He causes man to be active by various means—they being *secondary causes*.

First, God grants a clear vision of the glory of the end to be attained, that is, of the benefits to be acquired. He presents the acquisition of them as being a certain and immovable fact. The more clearly the intellect perceives the end in view and the more powerfully the heart is assured of its certainty, the greater spiritual strength will be and the more fervent its manifestation will be. Observe this in the Lord Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2). Observe this also in Moses, who esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26).

Secondly, God assures the soul of His help and support, and impresses upon the heart His promise relative to this. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa 41:10). A believer receives these promises by faith and strengthens himself by means of them. As someone who in a storm finds himself too weak to remain standing takes hold of a post or a tree and remains standing due to its immobility, the courageous person likewise takes hold of the strength of the Lord, and thus remains strong and unyielding. “Let him take hold of My strength” (Isa 27:5). This is what David did. “But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Sam 30:6).

Thirdly, the Lord shows the limitations, insignificance, and impotence of all that opposes. He shows that the honor of man, their love, the goods of this world, and all that appears beautiful and glorious in it, are in reality nothing, and that he can miss all this and nevertheless be joyful (Hab 3:17-18). The Lord shows that He is his portion—his all-sufficient portion (Lam 3:24), and that all that is beautiful in this world when compared to this portion is but dung (Phil 3:8). He shows that all the hatred, evil, and persecution

of men is nothing more than a bag of air, since they can neither move nor stir apart from the will of God—and that poverty, adversity, etc., are but a light tribulation which will very readily pass by (2 Cor 4:17). Hereby souls are fortified to such an extent that they even take “pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake,” for when they are weak, they are strong. They thus glory in their tribulations in order that the power of Christ may rest upon them (2 Cor 12:9-10).

Fourthly, the Lord shows them the goodness and righteousness of the matter which they are undertaking—showing them that He has commanded them to do so and that it is not their cause but His. This makes them courageous in the battle. They deem it to be to their honor that they, for Jesus’ sake, may battle against the enemies and that they are wounded in this battle. This enabled the apostles—in an astonishing manner—to speak with freedom before the great council (Acts 4:13), and having been scourged, to depart “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

Fifthly, the Lord shows them the ungodliness and the unrighteousness of those who oppress them. As they acknowledge the Lord to be a righteous Judge, they thus observe that He hates their persecutors, their cause, and their objectives. He Himself will therefore strive against them and reward them according to their iniquities. This engenders courage, and while triumphantly exulting over them, they say, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them” (Ps 118:6, 10). This encouraged David in the battle against Goliath, in that he had defied the Lord (1 Sam 17:45).

Sixthly, the Lord shows them the help which He has previously afforded them—both according to body and soul. It is as if He says, “When you considered everything lost; when you had already pronounced the sentence of demise and death upon yourself; when unrighteous things had the upper hand over you, your faith succumbed, your hope was almost at an end, your spiritual life was in a stupor, and when you indeed thought, ‘It is done and it will never be right with me again,’ have not I then frequently delivered you?” This experience renders much strength. “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37); “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (2 Cor 1:10).

Seventhly, the Lord comforts the soul engaged in warfare by inwardly assuring her of His grace. It is as if He says to her, “My grace is sufficient for thee. If I am your God, if I forgive you all your sins, love you, preserve you by My power, and shall eternally glorify you, is all then not well? Therefore, I do this and shall do it. I shall neither leave you nor forsake you. Be therefore courageous and I shall be with you. The evil which you fear either cannot or will not be able to bring upon you what you fear. Or else, I shall give you sufficient strength to bear it and I shall cause it to turn out for your best. ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee’ (Isa 43:2)—I shall be with thee. Be therefore of good courage and fight valiantly.” When the soul is comforted in such a manner, it is as if she receives wings to mount as an eagle, to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint.

Eighthly, despair at times also generates strength—which is most amazing. If, due to fear, you do nothing but shrink back; if you have given in to everything; if you are in the lowest condition and have despondently succumbed to the cross; if in all things you go along with the world; if during persecutions you have hidden yourself, been hypocritical, and have denied the truth; if in every respect you have followed your lusts and appear to have been conquered by them, behold, then that life which is still concealed within begins to manifest itself and you will receive strength from your weakness. You will wax “valiant in fight,” and turn “to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb 11:34). Just as fire breaks forth all the more vehemently due to being compressed by surrounding cold or something else, so it also occurs with the believer. The conscience is aroused, faith becomes active, and fear disappears, for he has nothing to lose—it cannot be worse. He will thus come forward again and manifest who he is. He will become stronger than he has ever been before. The weak person will say, “I am strong” (Joel 3:10). This we occasionally observe in those who have denied the truth, namely, that they recant and endure the fire with much more courage than someone who has remained steadfast.

The Effects of Spiritual Courage

The effect of spiritual courage is a courageous prevailing in the battle and perseverance in obedience toward God. That competence or propensity which never translates into deeds is useless. God has given His children grace for that very purpose—not that it would remain dormant and concealed within them, but in order that they

would labor with it. Particularly, this courageous valor cannot remain hidden if the opportunity is there—and there always are opportunities. The enemies are always engaged in battle against grace in the believer for the purpose of eradicating it, or to prevent it from being exercised. Believers are always surrounded by the Lord's injunctions to either do or refrain from something. There is thus always opportunity for the exercise of spiritual courage.

First, *the believer perseveres in the battle*. A Christian must continually be in armor, for he is in the church militant. The enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh are continually active and continually make assault upon his life. He must therefore continually be active in resisting them. The command is: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24); "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3); "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12).

(1) In a battle *something desirable* is at stake, which in this case is spiritual life here and felicity hereafter. The enemies rise up against this, wish to rob the believer of this, and prevent him from manifesting this life.

(2) *The believer knows the enemy*—he knows who he is and what his objective is. Believers are indeed acquainted with the devil, the world, and their own flesh, and the enemies are in turn acquainted with them.

(3) *There is enmity in the heart*. Thus, there is here not only a total contradiction of natures, which cannot but seek to expel each other, but these also stand in each other's way and mutually rob each other of joy. Therefore they cannot tolerate each other's presence.

(4) *There is subtlety* in trying to gain the advantage. Enemies are cunning in taking advantage of every opportunity, and thus a Christian, even though he is as harmless as a dove, is also as wise as a serpent.

(5) *There is the use of violence*. Enemies have great power which they exercise to the utmost with no regard for either body or soul. The believer in himself has but little strength, but by the omnipotent help of God he resists them in everything and does not yield in anything.

(6) *There is the ultimate outcome of the battle*. During the battle *first* the one and then the other will have the upper hand, but believers will at last be more than conquerors.

Since the Christian has such enemies, he is in need of strength and courage—both of which he uses. Having overcome fear, he, attacks them with spiritual weapons and courageously breaks through their battle arrays and tramples them under foot.

Secondly, a courageous person is not satisfied with repelling and

expelling his enemies; rather, at the same time he also perseveres courageously in order to effect *obedience toward God*. He lifts up his heart in the ways of the Lord as Jehoshaphat did (2 Chron 17:6). Secretly, as a matter between God and himself, he does what the Lord wills him to do, and externally manifests himself to be a Christian by his deeds. He does what needs to be done and says what needs to be said. He is not disturbed by the barking of those dogs and lets them know this. He courageously proceeds and causes them to yield, saying with David, “Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God” (Ps 119:115). Such is the nature of spiritual courage.

The Unconverted: Void of Spiritual Valor and Courage

Having thus presented the nature of spiritual valor and courage, this will be a satisfactory mirror to show the unconverted that they do not possess it at all, and to convince the godly of their deficiency in this respect.

First, *the unconverted* have neither part in nor desire for the spiritual and eternal benefits of the covenant of grace. They are without promises, without hope, and are not exercised concerning the acquiring of them. They therefore also have no enemies which try to rob them of these. In this respect there is nothing but peace with the devil, the world, and the flesh. If they have troubles, these are related to either the acquisition or preservation of earthly things. If it pertains to a refraining from sin, there will be a battle between the conscience and the will. If they are troubled about their salvation, it relates to God’s pronouncement of the sentence of condemnation in their heart if they fail to repent, and sometimes it already is the beginning of condemnation itself. Whatever it may be, there is no valor proceeding from having received strength from the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, when they are or will be engaged in some external religion, all they do is but of a lukewarm and feeble nature. It is only a soothing of the conscience or to acquire something of an external nature. If they can attain this without the external practice of religion, even the most insignificant issue is capable of drawing them away from the practice of religion. Even all that they do in this respect is, when considered in and of itself, a burden and weariness to them, and their proceeding is no more than at the pace of a donkey and a turtle.

Thirdly, there are those who have somewhat more light and also some inclination to repent, live godly, and confess the truth of the gospel. Something remote occurs, however, which could yield them

some harm and shame; or it is the time of persecution and there is the prospect of imprisonment, the stake, the gallows, the sword, or being sent to the galleys. Fear will then come upon them and prevent them from proceeding any further, which causes them to dissemble, saying, “Stop, enough of this!” Where is there evidence of the courage here which conquers fear out of love for God and toward spiritual benefits?

Fourthly, some fear damnation and wish to be in heaven subsequent to their death. They also perceive what the way to heaven is, but they do not see how they can traverse this way, and thus yield to desperation and despondency. That halts all their activity, and they have nothing left but an anxious and terrified heart. Or they will drive this despondency away by yielding to their sinful lusts, and thus the conscience is numbed. Or else they may commit suicide, and thus jump into the very hell which they feared.

Fifthly, there are those whose disposition resembles spiritual courage to some degree. Nothing is further from the truth, however. They join themselves to the godly, finding delight in being loved and esteemed by them. They speak in a haughty manner, rebuke others, engage in disputes, persevere, and neither fear harm nor shame. They are, however, neither motivated by love for spiritual benefits, by an assured hope, in dependence upon and reception of Christ’s strength, nor by obedience toward God. It is nothing more than a foolish passion which does not fear danger—either due to not being acquainted with the danger or due to imagining that it neither exists nor will come to pass. It may be the pursuit of their own glory, as if they were saying, “See my zeal for the Lord.” Or they have a brazen and bold disposition, this being the principle which motivates them. They are engaged without having the proper objective in view, without being united to Christ and being active in His strength, and without Christian prudence governing such valor. This is therefore not spiritual courage, but a sinful foolishness, feignedness, and brazenness.

All whom we have discovered as to who you are, be it known that you have neither spiritual life, faith, hope, nor spiritual valor. How will you be saved if, *first* of all, the violent take heaven by force (Matt 11:12), if no one will be crowned except they who have fought a lawful fight, and if only they who run obtain the prize (1 Cor 9:24)? What is to become of you who are lazy, fearful, hotheaded, foolish, reckless, brazen, and bold? *Secondly*, impress it upon your heart what God says of such as you are, “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 25:30). That which is written in Revelation shall come upon you: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither

cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth” (Rev 3:16); “But the fearful ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8).

The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Strength

Now I shall address myself unto you, *the godly*. I would rather comfort you; however, I cannot endure sin and I must therefore address a word of rebuke unto you so that you may become well. You have observed the nature of spiritual valor and this will already have shown you your deficiency in this respect. We shall present this a bit further to you so that you may abhor its unseemliness and sinfulness, and that you lift yourself up out of your deficiencies.

First, many spend but little time in reflecting upon the benefits—which, so to speak have been put on display for the purpose of obtaining them by way of valiantly striving for them. We ought to live in reflection upon eternal glory until it far excels all that is desirable, delightful, joyous, and lovely; so that it would excite our desires to acquire them as our only salvation. How delightful it ought to be to us, in this life, to walk with God in love, fear, and obedience, and thus to behold the invisible things with a heart that is elevated above all that is visible! We are very neglectful in this respect, however, and thus, the desire to attain this becomes weaker and the natural desire for that which is visible becomes greater. The result will then be that the goal in view will not strongly motivate to activity. Since the heart focuses upon various matters, it will be less intent upon that one thing it ought to focus on, and we shall then not be able to find satisfaction with the spiritual unless this be complemented with temporal matters. This is the fountain of all restlessness and weakness in the activity.

Secondly, we shall then neither be aware of the enemies, nor that the devil goes about us as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We shall not be aware that the world will alternately seek to steal the heart and draw it to itself, either by way of endearment or by way of disfavor—and thus bring us into snares which cannot be disentangled. We shall not be aware that our corrupt nature is continually engaged in obstructing us in doing that which is good as well as in enticing us to sin. This will render us more careless as far as preserving what we possess and in acquiring that which the regenerated nature would delight to have. We do not fear where we ought to fear, and thus the hands will hang down and the knees will be feeble.

Thirdly, when we increasingly lose sight of our objective and focus on earthly things instead, fear will grip our heart. We fear

where we ought not to fear. The prospect of injury, shame, the backbiting of many by the deceitful saying of all manner of evil, poverty, persecution, death, and whatever else is contrary to nature, have great power in us to stir up fear in spite of all exhortations to the contrary. “And fear not them which kill the body” (Matt 10:28); “Fear not, little flock” (Luke 12:32); “Why are ye fearful” (Matt 8:26); “Be careful for nothing” (Phil 4:6). In spite of such truths, we tremble and shudder for the present, and mostly for the future. This fear robs us of courage, hinders us in our duty, and draws us away to that which is not becoming. Where the spiritually courageous person overcomes fear, we who ought to be courageous will be overcome by fear. We allow ourselves to be abused by the enemy, and the heroes perish in the battle. Where is this bold steadfastness?

Fourthly, we are weak in all spiritual activity; that is, in prayer, striving against the enemies (particularly our besetting corruptions), in the exercise of virtue—all of which our circumstances continually demand. We shall engage in some activity, for spiritual life is existent. Everything is performed in such a lethargic fashion, however, and it is such a heavy task. It proceeds so intermittently, and the initial zeal and fervency have grown so very cold. We do not manfully persevere in obedience toward God. A temporal cross will make us immediately discouraged, and if matters do not proceed according to our wishes, we immediately become weak in faith in regard to our spiritual state. We shall doubt the love of God, His hearing of prayers, and His providence. Everything comes into a state of disarray and we proceed as if half asleep or as if near collapse. “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Prov 24:10).

Although God will not bring upon His children those judgments which will come upon the unconverted due to their unprofitableness, lukewarmness, and fearfulness, they nevertheless need to be deterred from such sins, “for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Eph 5:6). Furthermore, the lack of courage yields them nothing but unrest and spiritual anxiety. It entangles them more and more in all manner of sin, and the enemies become more powerful, holding them captive for a longer period of time. One will not overcome this by yielding to a lack of earnestness. “(Be) not slothful in business; (be) fervent in spirit” (Rom 12:11); “Be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19).

Exhortation to be Courageous

Therefore, all you who fear the Lord, who find yourself under the

yoke of your enemies, who have little strength to offer resistance, and who moreover use that little strength ineffectively, give ear and permit your heart to be of a willing disposition to be aroused as I engage myself to stir you up to be courageous in the battle.

First, hear the voice of the Lord and permit His address to you to lift up your hearts. As Lazarus arose from the dead upon hearing the voice of Christ, may you thus also be quickened from your lukewarm indolence to a noble courage. This is the Word of God to you: “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them” (Deut 31:6); “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13); “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not” (Isa 35:4); “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb 12:12).

Secondly, should not you be courageous in the battle? There is no other way to heaven except by way of courageous warfare. This is the way ordained by God: “And I will put enmity” (Gen 3:15). You have chosen this way when you entered into the kingdom of Christ and placed yourself under His banner. Or on the other hand: you must either sever yourself from the covenant, as a villain walk away from this ensign, and relinquish God, heaven, and everything else; or you must courageously engage in battle in order thus to conquer the devil and his cohorts, the world and all that is in it, as well as sin and all its lusts. The crown of glory must be worth so much to you; so precious must spiritual life and fellowship with God be to you, and such pleasure must you find in the will of God, that you will be willing to battle valiantly all the days of your life. Do not let this weigh heavily upon your heart, thinking, “Must I be in arms and engage in warfare my entire life? Must there be such an exertion of strength my entire lifetime? That is indeed a distasteful way and there is no way whereby I will persevere.” Yes, heaven must be that precious to you; or else you must relinquish it. Be it known, however, that to battle courageously is not such a heavy task as you allow yourself to believe. To always battle and succumb, or always to be equally matched in force, causing the outcome of the battle to be in doubt, is indeed a heavy task. It is a joyous task, however, to conquer as you are fighting, to proceed while conquering one city after another, and to humiliate the enemy battle after battle. Such will be the case if you but conduct yourself courageously, commensurate with your strength—be it that you battle as a child, a young man, or a man. You are so fearful of the battle because you do not proceed courageously; instead, due to your laxity, carelessness and lack of seriousness, you give the enemy the opportunity to get the advantage over you.

This makes them more courageous and you become weaker. Therefore, lift yourself up in the ways of the Lord and courageously engage yourself. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Thirdly, reflection upon your spiritual state is suitable to stir you up to be courageous. The Lord has chosen you unto salvation, has drawn you out of the power of your enemies, and called you as He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and Israel out of Egypt. He has placed you among His children in the kingdom of His Son. You have been born of God, and are thus God's offspring, children of the King (Ps 45:9, 13), and kings (Rev 5:10). You have a free and princely spirit (Ps 51:12) and the heart of a lion (Prov 28:1). The Lord has made you to be as "His goodly horse in the battle" (Zech 10:5). And He says concerning you in verse 5: "And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle" (Zech 10:5). These are they who proceed through thick and thin so that the earth trembles at every step, "because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded" (Zech 10:5); that is, a foot-soldier shall cut down the rider of the horse. Would you then allow yourself to be conquered by the devil, a despicable citizen of the world, or a vile corruption? A king is too noble to allow himself to be captured by an insignificant soldier. You ought therefore also to be courageous in a manner commensurate with your spiritual state and not yield to the despicable enemy. Do not forget your nobility, lest you bring shame upon your ancestry.

Fourthly, attentively take note of both the nature and the strength of the enemies, and this will make you all the more valiant. They are so evil that they will neither tolerate the least manifestation of good, nor the least motion of spiritual life. The more you yield to them, the more they demand from you and the more they gain in strength. They will neither cease nor become tired until they would have dragged soul and body into hell. They directly oppose the majestic and holy God as well as your beloved Lord Jesus. Can you witness and endure this in good conscience? Furthermore, they are despicable, vile, abhorrent, and abominable. Who can think about them without being indignant? And would you allow yourself to be overpowered by them? They have already been conquered by the Lord Jesus, for He has bruised the head of the devil (Gen 3:15; Heb 2:14), conquered the world (John 16:33), and robbed sin of its dominion (Rom 6:2, 14). They thus can neither harm you nor are they able to pull one hair out of your head. It would be too great an act of cowardice to fear the squirming of an enemy which is half dead. Therefore, do not allow

yourself to be conquered by such an evil, despicable, and impotent enemy; rather, battle valiantly and trample upon them as dirt under your feet. Conduct yourself as the armor-bearer of Jonathan, who followed him and, coming behind him, killed the enemies. Follow the Lord Jesus likewise, for He goes before you and slays the enemies before you. You may then push them toward Him. Therefore, be courageous in the battle and the victory over such enemies will be sure.

Fifthly, take notice that everyone's eye is upon you, and give heed as to how you conduct yourself in this battle. You have entered the arena together with the enemy, and the spectators are standing roundabout to witness the battle. On the one side stands your King, together with the holy angels and believers. Their heart is one with you, and they are desirous that you would be the victor. Christ's cause is yours and your cause is His and theirs. They will rejoice and glory if you are victorious. On the other side are the devils and the world. They gnash their teeth and would love to see harm done to the cause of Christ by your being conquered. Will you therefore be weak in the battle? Will you allow yourself to be conquered in the presence of everyone? Will you cause this indignity to come upon Christ, who is a witness of this battle, has invited everyone to observe your courage, and inspires you to be courageous? Will angels (if this were possible) as well as the godly be covered with shame and be grieved because of you? Will you permit the enemy to triumph as conquerors? How would you dare to come to your King and lift up your countenance to Him? No, no—so it ought not to be. You must be courageous as a hero so that Christ would boast of you as the Lord boasted of Job's steadfastness (Job 1 & 2).

Sixthly, recognize what your own strength is, and look to your helpers and brothers-in-arms. It is true that you have no strength by nature, and that, having been born again, you have but little strength (Rev 3:8). Having received Christ's strength, however, it is yours and thus you may do all things through Christ which strengthens you (Phil 4:13). Therefore, make use of it; run with Him through a troop, and with Him leap over the wall, in order to take hold of your enemies in their strength (Ps 18:29)—for He girds you with strength and teaches your hands to war (vss. 32, 34). Therefore, jubilate: "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me" (Ps 118:7).

Seventhly, reflect upon those who have engaged in battle before you and consider how blessed the outcome has been for them.

They are now crowned as conquerors—as is to be observed in the register of the heroes of faith, Heb 11. “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ... Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord” (James 5:10-11). Consider Paul: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 4:7-8). Consider other believers who live with you—how each of them battles according to his strength. Should all of that not arouse your courage? He who therefore may behold such a King, may be in such a magnificent army, and is surrounded by so many valiant heroes who have each decided to give their life for the Lord Jesus and to battle unto death—should he not battle courageously?

God’s Promises for Courageous Warriors

Eighthly, take seriously to heart the promises which God has promised to courageous warriors. God will sustain you while you are engaged in battle. “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart” (Ps 27:14).

(1) The Lord then causes believers to have a clearer view of the promised benefits in their preciousness, and to have a more lively hope toward them.

(2) He shows them the limitations and weakness of the opposition, so that believers can look beyond them and already consider themselves to be conquerors.

(3) He shows them the help He has previously given them.

(4) He comforts and encourages them.

(5) He removes fear of the opposition.

(6) He infuses strength and girds them with strength, so that even a weak believer says, “I am a mighty one.” The Lord promises the crown of glory. Consider the promises found in Rev 2 and 3 “Him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life ... shall not be hurt of the *second* death ... will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone ... will I give power over the nations ... I will give him the morning star ... the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels ... will I make a pillar in the temple of My God ... and I will write upon him the name of My God ... will I grant to sit with Me in My throne” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 28; 3:5, 12, 21). He who desires all these glorious things must and will

obtain them by battling courageously. Therefore, engage yourself courageously!

Final Directions for This Warfare

Endeavor to conduct yourself well, however, and to engage in this task properly. “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully” (2 Tim 2:5).

First, arm yourself therefore from head to toe. Paul teaches us what these weapons are. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph 6:13-18).

Secondly, in this warfare be on your guard against:

(1) *Carelessness*. Do not imagine that you already have overcome when you have a good intention. Such intentions easily lose their vigor. Do not imagine that the enemy has already disappeared, for he lies in wait for you. Therefore, “Be sober, be vigilant” (1 Pet 5:8).

(2) *Despondency*. When the enemies are too strong for you, the warfare too heavy, and God is distant, do not give up courage, for that is as much as casting away your weapons and holding forth to the enemy (from whom no grace is to be expected anyhow) your defenseless hands. Therefore in reliance upon the strength and infallible promises of God, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Josh 1:6).

(3) *Pride* and boasting in your own strength. Remember Peter who said, “Yet will I never be offended” (Matt 26:35); “Yet will I not deny Thee” (Matt 26:35). Then the defeat is imminent. Therefore, “Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom 11:20).

Thirdly, in this warfare:

(1) Exercise *caution*, and do not go beyond the boundaries of your calling. Do not engage in things which are beyond your reach and beyond your competence. Do not hastily and with impulsive passion engage yourself. Do not imagine by yourself that you have enough wisdom, but always *first* seek the counsel of the Lord—however insignificant the matter or circumstance may be. A maid was strong enough to cast Peter down. In special cases seek the counsel of the godly. “He that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise”

(Prov 12:15); “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph 5:15).

(2) *Flee from those opportunities* from which you are permitted to flee, and especially those by which you have frequently been entrapped. He already makes good progress who, in order to avoid sin, avoids the opportunities for sin, and does not engage in a specific endeavor unless called to do so.

(3) *Be especially opposed to the sin* which you are most inclined to commit, toward which your nature is most inclined, and which is related to your calling. Carefully guard against the initial manifestations, for then it is easiest to resist it. Smother the children in the cradle, catch the little foxes, and remove the dead fly which can cause the most eminent substance to stink.

(4) *Always take refuge to Christ*, for He is a sun and a shield (Ps 84:11). As you permit your heart to wander away from Him, the arrow of the enemy will immediately hit you. Emulate David in this respect: “Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me” (Ps 143:9).

(5) *Be continually engaged in prayer*, for all your strength must come from the Lord—and God, when He is to do something, wants to be inquired of. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt 26:41).

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

The Profession of Christ and His Truth

Spiritual valor manifests itself at specific occasions. It reveals itself, in word and deed, in the manifestation of the grace which is within us, our faith in Christ, our love toward Him, and our hope in Him. The enemies cannot tolerate this light, and they therefore resist it and assault those who cause this light to shine forth. The valiant person does not yield to them, however; he presents himself publicly with that much more freedom by way of a steadfast confession. The word “confession” (or profession) means: to make known, to reveal, to admit, to declare publicly, to promise, and to thank. All of this applies, for a confession is a revelation of the disposition of our heart toward certain matters. Sometimes it is used in reference to the confession of sin—which one admits to have committed—either against God: “I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord” (Ps 32:5; Matt 3:6); or to each other: “Confess your faults one to another” (James 5:16).

However, we are here discussing a profession as it pertains to making a declaration 1) about God: “Every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom 14:11); 2) about Christ: “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11); 3) concerning true holiness and godliness: “... professing godliness” (1 Tim 2:10); and 4) concerning true doctrine (Titus 1:9).

Profession of the truth is the unwavering witness, in word and deed, of the truth of God as it is revealed, acknowledged, and believed—a truth which leads man unto salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This profession is to the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor.

It is a witness. God neither wants His truth, nor the grace which He has bestowed upon someone, to remain hidden; rather He wills that *light would shine forth out of darkness*. Furthermore, He wills that those in whose hearts the light has shined and who are light in the Lord would let their light shine *before men* (Matt 5:16). Such are called witnesses for Christ. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (Acts 1:8); “...Antipas was My faithful martyr (Rev 2:13); “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe” (John 1:7). *The act of witnessing pertains to the revealed truth of God*, or generally speaking to all that God communicates in His Word—and in particular the way whereby God leads the elect unto salvation. Occasionally, without any further modification, this is referred to as *truth*. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32); “... even as thou walkest in the truth” (3 John 1:3). At times there is modification: “The way of truth” (2 Pet 2:2), “the word of truth” (James 1:18), “the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:5), “the truth of Christ” (2 Cor 11:10). Believers rely upon this truth, and to this truth they bear witness, while rejecting all errors.

Christ is the marrow of this truth. The truth reveals Christ as to who He is in His Person; who He is in His divine and human natures and in His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and who He is in His states of humiliation (that is, His suffering and death and its efficacy unto reconciliation and the meriting of salvation for the elect) and exaltation: His resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, and coming to judgment. This Jesus is the object of confession. “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men ...” (Matt 10:32); “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus ...” (Rom 10:9). The Lord Jesus is the eternal way of salvation. “Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12); “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). He is therefore called “the captain of their salvation” (Heb 2:10). A professor of the truth bears witness to Him as He is revealed in His Word, and declares that all men who are outside of Him perish and that all who believe in Him are led unto salvation by Him.

In order for someone to bear witness to this truth, he must both be acquainted with and believe it. Thus this profession is the witness of *a truth which is both acknowledged and believed*. To profess something with which we are not acquainted is nothing but foolishness.

Such is the practice of the papists: “I believe what the church believes.” To profess that which we do not believe is nothing but hypocrisy. Scripture therefore speaks of “knowledge of the truth” (Rom 2:20), “the acknowledgment of the mystery of God” (Col 2:2), “the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), “the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18), and “knowledge of salvation” (Luke 1:77). He must not only know the truth but he must also believe it. Knowledge and faith are therefore conjoined. “And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69); “... add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge” (2 Pet 1:5). Profession of the truth does not only require that we bear witness to the truth that Christ is the only way of salvation, but it is also a declaration of our faith in Him and of our hope upon Him. “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets” (Acts 26:27). This profession is therefore called “the profession of our faith” (Heb 10:23). The apostle confirms this: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet 3:15).

Profession of the Truth is in Word and Deed

This profession occurs *in word and deed*. It occurs *with words* if we declare the truth of God to others by speaking of it for the purpose of instructing those who are not acquainted with it, to build up and strengthen those who have but little knowledge, and to the conviction of those who oppose the truth and persecute us because of the truth. Observe this in the following passages: “... with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:10); “Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11).

We profess the truth with deeds if we:

(1) Publicly join ourselves to the true church and persevere in fellowship with her, that is, with the people of God and Christ who own the cause of Christ by bearing witness to it and who affirm the following: “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise” (Isa 43:21); “But ye are a ... peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

(2) Display the image of the Lord Jesus in a holy walk and if Christ is formed in us (Gal 4:19), and we bear the image of the heavenly Adam (1 Cor 15:49). The luster of holiness conveys to everyone that we associate with Jesus. “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Hereby the counsel knew that Peter and John had been

with Jesus (Acts 4:13), and persecutors identified true Christians as follows: *he does not lie, he does not gamble, etc.* and he is thus a Christian. Upon this they were arrested.

(3) Endure all suffering for the sake of the truth of Christ. God has put enmity between Christ and His own on the one hand, and the serpent and his seed on the other hand. All unconverted men who live according to the flesh always persecute those who live according to the Spirit—this being due to opposite natures, objectives, and manner of conduct. As soon as someone becomes a partaker of the nature of Christ, places himself under His ensign, and stands up for Him, everything at once opposes him. Someone will not be persecuted for the hope of salvation itself, unless it would be by those who deny the resurrection of the dead. Rather, the issue is the way by which one seeks to obtain salvation. The name of Christ is so hated by the Jews and the Mohammedans that they will persecute someone unto death for this. Among those who bear the name of Christian one will not readily be persecuted for having a general hope of salvation in Christ. If, however, someone knows Christ in truth, and confesses Him to be such as He is and to be the Savior that He is, all false Christians will come against this. Such is the case with *Socinians* (who also wish to bear the name of Christian), and with *Arminians*—as was shown to be true in the beginning of the previous century and would still prove to be so if they had the power. This is also the case with *all the unconverted* within as well as outside of the church. This is particularly true for the *Antichrist*, who is drunk—and still drinks himself drunk—with the blood of those saints whom he can grasp in his clutches. When a true Christian manifests himself as he is, he will become the focus of everyone's opposition. All who are thus inclined, according to their power, will persecute him with heart and deeds, and will not rest until he is out of the way. If someone conducts himself faithfully under such circumstances, he professes Christ, and whoever is killed because of this witness is a *martyr*. The latter is the Greek word μα&ρτυρ (*martur*) which means *to be a witness*.

The Qualities of an Unwavering Witness of the Truth

This profession is an *unwavering witness*. In this definition we make mention of one characteristic, but it implies several others.

First, this profession must occur *out of love* to the Lord Jesus and His revealed truth. Someone can die for his testimony of the Lord Jesus merely for the sake of being honored, without having delight in the truth. He also can only be motivated merely by the pressure of his conscience since he knows it to be the truth. Or he can also

do this with the imagination that he shall be saved. This enables Papists to allow themselves to be killed by Mohammedans and the heathen. This enables all manner of heretics to die for their sentiments. Suffering itself does not make a person a martyr; rather, it is the cause for which one suffers, as well as the love which one has for this cause. If one dies for the truth, then his death is indeed a testimony; however, the one who suffers will not benefit from his suffering if it does not issue forth from love. “And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:3). It is love which caused the bride to say, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend” (Song 5:16), and Paul, “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14).

Secondly, it must occur *voluntarily*. Human nature fears suffering; however, such fear does not contradict voluntary willingness. When death and the profession of Christ stand in opposition to each other, the faithful professor of the truth will choose his profession and death above life and denial. Neither does he do so reluctantly and scarcely, but with his whole heart. Even though suffering and death make him fearful, and he cannot cast this fear away, he nevertheless conquers this fear, so that he neither yields to this abiding fear nor consequently recants. He chooses to confess Jesus all the same—come what may. He inwardly desires this and freely offers himself to the Lord, saying, “Here I am.” “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power” (Ps 110:3).

Observe how sorrow and willingness are conjoined in the disciples (Luke 22:45). To them the Lord Jesus said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41).

Thirdly, there must be *boldness*. Fear indeed remains, and this in itself is not sinful. Boldness conquers fear, however, and perseveres. It renders a man willing to put everything on the line—even life itself—due to having such high esteem for Jesus, His truth, and His cause, and to seeing in it so much glory for Jesus and ourselves, and so much benefit for others. Boldness will cause us to own His cause and to despise derision and grief. One will then not show himself to be of a servile disposition; that is, he will neither be filled with shame, tremble, be captured against his will, be forced to give a testimony, nor to present himself as being miserable in order to obtain mercy from the enemies—thus prompting them to deal gently with him. The enemies have no compassion, for the mercies of the wicked are cruel. They will do what the Lord has decreed concerning them—no more and no less. In such a display of humility there is some semblance of succumbing and the enemies will become all the more courageous,

thinking, “We already have him under control, and we shall be able to push him a little further.” Instead—both by words and countenance—we must present ourselves as courageous champions who have now entered the arena to oppose our enemy. Such was the case with Peter and John: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled” (Acts 4:13). With such boldness Stephen stood before the council, so that all who belonged to the council, steadfastly beholding him, beheld his countenance as being the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). When our life is at stake, we must be as bold as we would be in time of freedom.

Fourthly, there must be *caution*. This is a beautiful word and many continually have it in their mouth when they do not want to engage themselves. This is as much as being remiss in duty. To yield relative to the cause of Christ is then considered to be peace-loving and wise. Those who boldly own His cause are, in the opinion of such, viewed as unwise, headstrong, and imprudent. They will deem it to be his own fault if such a person gets into an uncomfortable situation and causes others to suffer likewise. Be on your guard against such devilish cautiousness, abhor it, and arm yourself against those who practice such caution—they betray the church, prevent the confession of Jesus, and are a hindrance to other professors of the truth. Rather, caution must govern us in our engagement. We must not step beyond the boundaries of our calling and condition, run where we have no business being, or cast pearls before the swine. The latter are those whom we have found to become more wicked and stubborn when trying to bring them to repentance by means of the gospel. We must carefully watch against speaking too much or too little while engaged in defending the cause of Christ—as well for pride, a pedantic attitude, and the seeking of our own honor. We must see the evil from afar and avoid it, unless other circumstances dictate to us that we anticipate it. When the Lord Jesus sent forth His disciples to preach the gospel, He gave them the following instruction: “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt 10:16).

Fifthly, there must be *uprightness*. All hypocrisy and ambiguity must be far removed from such a profession. That was the sin of Peter, and his *first* effort to disguise himself is considered as much a denial of Christ as the *second* and *third* denial (Matt 26:34, 70). Rather, in our profession of the truth we must fully own and state the truth of the gospel—stating clearly, explicitly, and without pretense what is to be found in our heart. We shall have more peace in our heart if we have said too much in seeking to express

our faith in evangelical truths succinctly, than if, due to a quiet fear, we have said too little. “In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Titus 2:7).

Sixthly, there must be an *unwavering commitment*. It is not sufficient to have great courage before there is a need for it, and to triumph prior to the battle and the victory—as many have done who have shamefully succumbed and were guilty of denial when it came to the point. It is not sufficient to begin, to persevere for some time, and yet to yield in the end. Rather, we must remain steadfast until the end. You should know from the very outset that, in times of persecution, the antichrist will so conceal his intent and will give in to you in so many ways, that it appears that we are entirely free to remain with the truth and religion—yes, as if popery is now so reformed as to be almost of one faith with the true Reformed Church. It is but a minor point which is to be overlooked and then you will be free from death and everything else—indeed, even be amply rewarded. One will be asked to affirm, for example, that he embraces and believes all the truths which are in the Romish church. For popery does indeed believe many truths of the Reformed church, and one must only forsake the errors of Calvin or of those who are in the Reformed church. What does Calvin matter? He was but a man. Furthermore, the Reformed themselves admit that he has erred here or there, and there are many quarrels within the Reformed church, for what the one says the other denies. Thus, without doing any violence to your conscience, you can declare and affirm that you embrace the truth of the Romish church and reject the errors of Calvin, as well as those that are to be found in the Reformed church. Thus, life or death is contingent upon this, and it is but a small point of contention.

Be it known, however, that everything hinges on this point of contention (as insignificant as one may make it), for if this point were so insignificant, and if they are so nearly in agreement, why would they then kill anyone for such an insignificant point of contention? It is therefore not so insignificant. It is a departing from, renouncing, and forsaking of the true church and of Christ, the Head of that church, as well as of the truth of which the Reformed church is the pillar and ground. It is a transferring into the assembly and army of the antichrist, who persecutes the true church, sheds the blood of the saints, and opposes Christ. On the basis of that argument one can also become Jewish or Islamic, for some truths are yet to be found with them. It is true that our faith is not based upon Calvin, for he was but a man. We do not wish to defend that in which he has erred. It is also true that the Reformed

church is not perfect, and we do not wish to defend the errors of given individuals. If the errors are grievous, then their proponents are expelled. However, to make such a declaration relative to the profession of truth is but a snare to entrap the upright. We must therefore be steadfast in all things and, with Moses, neither leaving one hoof behind nor disengage the least link in the chain. This is the steadfastness which the Lord Jesus requires: “But he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt 10:22).

The Purpose of Profession of the Truth

The *purpose* of this profession is the *glorification of our God and the salvation of our neighbor*. It is not suffering but the cause which makes the martyr—and not the cause alone, but it is the objective which makes a good martyr. This profession must proceed from love and be made for a holy purpose.

The purpose is, *first of all, to glorify God*; that is, to make known the perfections of God—His goodness, righteousness, truth, etc., which come to the foreground in the salvation of man—through Christ in word and deed, and by giving expression to this by way of a holy life. For, says the Lord Jesus, “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8). This occurs when we patiently endure everything which befalls us for the sake of the truth, for when someone suffers for the sake of the truth, the truth will become manifest and be searched and known all the more. “This spake He, (that is, Christ of Peter) signifying by what death he should glorify God” (John 21:19). It is grace to have this as the objective in speaking, conduct, and suffering, and that in turn begets a martyr who is pleasing in the sight of God, angels, and men.

Secondly, *it is to the salvation of our neighbor*. A Christian does not only desire to be saved himself, but he has love for his neighbor, also greatly desiring to bring his neighbor to the knowledge of the truth, and to repentance and salvation. He perceives that the confession of the Lord Jesus is a fruitful means to that end. He therefore owns His cause in time of peace as well as in time of persecution, and he is glad when he has opportunity for this. He knows that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and that by means of speaking and experiencing the truth others are won. This is his objective according to the apostle’s instruction: “... but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph 4:29). He shows furthermore that suffering for the sake of the truth also has that fruit. “Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace” (Phil 1:7). To

love that goal and to have this as the objective in his profession of truth is a glorious and holy endeavor.

God Requires Profession of the Truth

We have thus held before you the nature of professing the truth. This, however, is the duty of everyone who wishes to be saved; salvation or damnation is contingent upon it. Impress the following upon your heart: “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven” (Matt 10:32-33). Consider furthermore what is written in Rom 10:9-10: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Some seek to pacify themselves in a time of persecution by deluding themselves, “Merely to have but true faith in the heart is sufficient unto salvation. Even if our mouth is silent and even if we externally join the church of the antichrist, this is but an external ceremony which neither benefits nor detracts. He is foolish who thereby endangers his belongings and his life—belongings and life which are surely worth participation in a mass.” This argumentation is refuted by the apostle, however, when he says, “and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Wherever true faith dwells in the heart, there the mouth will not be silent. “I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor 4:13). Add to this: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (that is, to be the Savior He is and is declared to be in the Word of God), God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). Make as many excuses as you wish, you will but deceive yourself to your eternal damnation, for salvation and damnation are contingent upon this confession.

When the church prospers, a multitude of all manner of men will join her; however, they are not all fit to confess Jesus.

(1) Such is true for the ignorant, who do not know God’s way unto salvation. They cannot give an account of their faith, for what would they say? They are inexperienced in the Word, the truth is hidden from them, and they have not known the way of peace.

(2) Such is true for those who do not believe in Christ. They may have some book knowledge of Christ, but they know of no transaction with Him to receive Him, cause Him to dwell in the heart by faith, be in Him, and grow in Him.

(3) Such is true for those who have no love for God, for the truth, or for the upbuilding of the church—those to whom salvation is not glorious and desirable, and who perceive more glory, sweetness, and advantage in earthly things, this life, and the temporary enjoyment of sin.

(4) Such is true for those who daily and in very deed live for that which is visible; that is, in all world conformity and in the indulgence in all the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh as well as the pride of life, while in the meantime satisfying themselves with an external religion of form and custom. All such are not professing the name of the Lord, but are already denying the Lord Jesus in time of peace. To you Titus 1:16 is applicable: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” When persecutions come for the Word’s sake, they will drop as ripe plums. The honor of the world, money, and convenience will be worth much more to them than Jesus and all His fullness. They will not be willing to endure either injury or shame for the love of Jesus. Yes, they themselves will become persecutors—if not the most bitter ones—of the true confessors of Christ. Many already persecute the truly godly. Know that the Lord Jesus has already—so to speak, with His finger—identified you during His sojourn upon earth. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matt 13:20-21); “They ... which ... in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). And what will be your end? It will be what Paul writes: “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil 3:19). Christ, in the day of judgment, will deny you before His Father, before the angels, and before men. “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:23).

Believers Exhorted to Confess Jesus Boldly

Now I will turn to you, true believers, to stir you up to confess the Lord Jesus boldly. Prepare yourself for the trial of your faith, and strengthen yourself to be steadfast in your confession, for we shall also have our turn. God has always dealt with His church in this manner. God traverses from nation to nation in bringing persecution upon the church. Presently the church in *France* is having her turn, and it will perhaps soon be our turn, for the

church has rarely been so long at peace, as she has been in *The Netherlands*. The church of *The Netherlands* is not only entirely corrupt in a moral sense, but also in the manifestation of all manner of new doctrine. Wherever ignorance prevails, errors will surface. It is a certain sign that *The Netherlands* will be visited by way of either external or internal persecution—persecuted by men who will not tolerate sound doctrine and who hate holiness of life. The godly will be tried so that the truth of life and doctrine of the few faithful may shine forth according to Paul’s prophecy: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). Therefore, be prepared, so that when persecution comes, you may be ready and steadfast to confess Jesus and thus receive the crown of martyrs.

In order to stir you up in this respect, I shall add a letter here which I have previously written to some persecuted and oppressed brethren.

A LETTER OF EXHORTATION

to Be Steadfast in the Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Truth in Time of Persecution and Martyrdom

My beloved brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been deemed worthy by Him to be His witnesses, to suffer for His cause, and to oppose the antichrist! Grace and peace be multiplied to you from the God of all grace and all comfort!

As your suffering and steadfastness have come to my knowledge, I think of the words of the apostle: “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also (evil entreated)¹⁶ in the body” (Heb 13:3). I must also think of the declaration of the Lord Jesus to be made at the time of the general and final judgment: “I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matt 25:36). Since I cannot physically pay you a visit, I will therefore endeavor to visit you with my pen, praying that the omnipotent and good God may bless my address to you to the strengthening and comfort of your soul.

Be courageous, you champions of the Lord, and do not succumb in the battle. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13). Do not give heed to either internal or external persecution. When spiritual light has driven away the clouds of the soul, the heart is strengthened by grace, and internal assaults are

¹⁶ These words are added in italics in the Statenvertaling.

rebuffed and have lost their potency, you will then be able to be publicly manifest as a “goodly horse in the battle” (Zech 10:3).

Our heart is inclined to be tossed to and fro by internal assaults; and even if we persevere, these will cause us to lose courage and joy when enduring suffering. Among the most prominent of these assaults are:

(1) No one knows of my suffering, for it transpires in secret. If I were permitted to suffer publicly upon the scaffold, the Lord Jesus would yet be glorified by me, the gospel would yet be confirmed, believers would be strengthened, and others would be convicted; however, my suffering is now useless and fruitless.

(2) I do not suffer so much for the truth as for my sins. God punishes me for my previously committed misdeeds, and therefore I can only expect distress in my suffering rather than comfort.

(3) I suffer from a bad reputation and crimes are laid to my charge. The best they can do with me is laugh about me, calling me a martyr—not of the Lord Jesus, but of *Calvin*.

(4) I do not suffer in consequence of love for Jesus and His truth, but only due to the compunction of my conscience, which cannot believe what one knows to be a lie, nor deny what one knows to be the truth. Or, I suffer and do not recant because I am fearful of being condemned after my death if I were to be guilty of denial.

(5) My suffering is of such long duration, and there is not the least hope of ever being delivered; this makes me discouraged and sorrowful.

(6) It is but an insignificant matter and is merely form and custom. I maintain faith in the heart, even though I join myself externally to them and conform to them; it is all compulsory.

(7) Other godly souls fare so well. Why am I in such misery?

(8) I am always full of fear—either for death, prolonged and severe suffering, the wickedness of men, or man’s craftiness. It is for this reason that I am drawn into suffering and compelled to suffer, rather than that I endure it willingly and courageously. This suffering is too severe for me and I can no longer endure it. I am furthermore concerned about my loved ones who have denied the faith, and above all about my children who have been put into monasteries and who drink in idolatry from their youth.

I shall *first* endeavor to remove these concerns, and then I shall stir up your souls to be steadfast, courageous, and patient.

First, it is the practice of the enemies to cause believers to die a thousand deaths in secret, for they know by experience that public executions produce more believers than that are put to death. On the other hand, believers wish to suffer in public, being of the opinion (due to their misconception) that they will then glorify Jesus more. You ought to know, however, that the Lord Jesus and

the holy angels observe secret suffering as much as public suffering, and God brings your secret suffering to the knowledge of the church and your suffering is spoken of throughout the entire world. Public suffering is frequently intermingled with the seeking of self. The soul will then not be without strife as to whether she is steadfast to gain her own honor, to be free from the shame of recantation, and for other reasons. This will confuse the soul and deprive her of such purity, comfort, and courage in suffering as are experienced in secret suffering. Therefore do not select the manner of suffering—neither a greater nor lesser degree. The sovereign Lord, who, in His unsearchable wisdom and unfathomable love, imposes upon every faithful martyr whatever befalls him, is pleased to go such a way with you. This way is neither the result of the cunningness and wickedness of the enemies, nor a consequence of our choice, carefulness, or carelessness; rather, it is according to the Lord's decree. It is in this manner that He wills to be glorified by you and to bring you to glory. Those who are suited for suffering of long duration are frequently not suited for public suffering. Fear for a violent death has caused many to recant and deprived them of all composed thoughts relative to faith, hope, and love—which they at times may have in more abundance when suffering in solitude and for a lengthy period of time. Secret suffering will not always remain hidden. It will all become manifest in the day of judgment and all men will acknowledge you as a faithful martyr. Therefore be silent before God and say with blind submission, “Thy will be done and do with me as it pleases Thee; only give me strength to bear it.”

Secondly, there is a spiritual assault by which the soul can be greatly vexed; namely, that one is not suffering for the cause of Christ, but that this is a judgment of God upon prior committed sins and for previously denying Him. Even though such an assault will rob us of courage in our suffering, it does happen to be very beneficial, for this causes the soul to examine herself and thereby is led to Christ. Everything is turned upside down, our previous sins and sinful life come to mind in a lively sense. We begin to doubt whether we have ever possessed grace, are converted, and if everything has not merely ensued from an enlightened understanding. We shall be terrified by death, and be fearful of being damned. See to it that you do not avoid these thoughts; rather, reflect upon them and permit your concerns to have a more intense effect. This is followed by unsettling strife, and this godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. We shall begin anew as if we had never rightly done so. We shall long for Jesus in order to be a partaker of His blood, and to have Him as a ransom for the forgiveness of our sins. We shall pray, weep, and wait, as well as yearn for Christ to have Him as our Surety. We shall choose Him, receive Him, and by faith bring Him into the heart, surrendering ourselves to Him without any reservation and recantation.

Then there are additional concerns—such as: am I elect? Is it not too late? Is not the time of grace past? It becomes dark, Jesus hides Himself, the Lord seems to cast the soul away, and it appears as if there is no grace to all eternity. This is followed by an inclination to deny Christ since we feel to be no partaker of Him anyway. See to it that you also do not avoid this battle, for when the battle will be most vehement, grace will break through. We shall then come to Jesus with more composure, perceiving that He offers Himself in the gospel. We shall enter into the covenant of grace, rely upon Jesus with more confidence, give our soul into His hand, and without fear entrust it to Him. We shall thus become conscious that our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ's blood and that salvation has been merited. From this issues forth peace of conscience, spiritual joy, ardent love for Jesus, and a courageous willingness to suffer and die for His name. Behold, such is the lovely disposition which the soul acquires from the temptation that we are suffering for our sins rather than the truth. We then perceive the contrary, namely, that God has been satisfied, that sins have been forgiven, that God has imposed this suffering upon us, that He calls us to confess His name and glorify Him, and that in this way He will place the glorious crown of martyrs upon us. That which is eternal then becomes glorious and that which is of the world despicable, and this joy makes all that is bitter to be sweet. From our weakness and our earlier denial we shall derive strength, and we shall increase in strength. We thus make improvement by no longer trusting in self, but by standing in the power of God, and, with joyous courage, endure everything to which the Lord calls us by His grace and of which He deems us worthy.

Thirdly, there is the temptation of suffering from an evil reputation of being disobedient to the government, of having committed a given evil, of being stubborn, and being but a martyr for the sake of *Calvin* and his errors. You must skillfully resist this temptation for you know very well that they do not have an evil deed as a basis for torturing you, but they rather do so to cause you to deny the truth. They have but fabricated this evil reputation. You know indeed that Calvin is not the issue; you do not esteem him more highly than other faithful ministers. You do not rely upon his word but only upon the Word of God. God, angels, and believers also know this—yes, it is even known to the enemies, and they take occasion to harden their heart and render yours weak by way of this evil reputation. Thus, the Jews dealt with the Lord Jesus and said, “For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy” (John 10:33); “This man calleth for Elias...let us see whether Elias will come to save Him” (Matt 27:47, 49). It is therefore no wonder that the enemies, having the same nature, do the same things. The Lord will reveal the reason for your suffering in the day of judgment, and

your glory in heaven will not be diminished, but be increased. Be therefore faithful.

Fourthly, it is even a greater trial to be assaulted with the following thoughts: “I am not suffering for the truth but only because my conscience compels me to do so. It is not love for Christ that motivates me, but rather fear of being damned if I recant. My faith, relative to my spiritual condition, is weak. I doubt whether I already have been regenerated, whether Christ is my Savior, and whether I shall be saved—even if I am suffering and dying for the truth. The unconverted can also suffer and die due to being compelled by their conscience and being convinced of the truth.” It is indeed true that salvation or damnation is contingent upon whether we confess or deny the truth. Impress the following texts vividly upon your heart: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:10); “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven” (Matt 10:32–33). You thus observe here that it is better to be faithful in your confession—even if you do so in a deficient manner and due to being compelled by your conscience—than to recant and do violence to your conscience. Furthermore, if you are mostly motivated by the compulsion of your conscience, do not insist that this is not intermingled with love for Jesus and His truth. You are conscious of the one since it manifests itself most strongly, but if you were to carefully examine yourself and focus but a little upon Jesus, you will experience that you love Him too much to deny Him. You will then say, “Beloved Jesus, I do not desire to deny Thee.” Love will indeed manifest itself in sweet affections, but in essence it consists in the will being engaged by the intellect. Therefore, whenever the will consciously values and chooses Jesus, and motivates us to confess Him, then such is a confession of Jesus out of love. Therefore do not let this confuse and discourage your soul, but rather rejoice that your conscience is enlightened and lively, and acknowledge that it is not only your conscience motivating you in your faithful confession. Even if, however, the conscience were silent—yes, if it were more quiet than the intelligent will—love would manifest itself all the more. When the sun is down, the stars can be observed much better, for even though they are also present during the day, they cannot be seen due to the presence of a greater light.

Regarding your spiritual state, if there is a heartfelt sorrow, loathing, grieving, and shame about both former sins and your sinful heart at present; if you are exercised to receive Christ as Surety and to apply Him to your soul (even if it is in darkness, strife, and without assurance); if a tender watching over the heart proceeds from this to refrain from sinning; if the inclination arises to

cleave to Jesus in all faithfulness and to suffer and die for His name (even if it pleased Him not to give much light and comfort), then it is in truth and there is life and faith. Rely then upon the promises and the Lord will indeed favor you with grace and comfort, even if it be at the very end of your life. It is a much more courageous deed to remain faithful to Jesus in darkness and while being subject to internal strife, than when you enjoy many sweet frames and the comforts of the Spirit. Oh, what a great grace it is to jealously guard your heart, be humble, and run after Jesus with tears in your eyes, for such are frequently most genuine in their spiritual exercises and at times become the strongest Christians! Keep courage.

Fifthly, there will be another temptation in conjunction with the others—all of which will reenforce each other in bringing us to recantation. The argument is as follows: The difference in viewpoint is but very insignificant. They are only desirous that we would deny the errors of Calvin, and this we can do quite readily, for Calvin has errors which I do not wish to support, and I do not need to suffer for Calvin's sake. They will also permit me to adhere to my faith in my heart. They will not inflict suffering upon me for that reason as long as I externally conform to their conduct, attend the mass, and physically bow before the wafer and their images. This external performance is but ceremonial, and salvation is contingent upon the faith we maintain in our heart. Circumstances are not the same as during the persecutions of the heathen, at which time one was obliged to renounce Christ. The parties in question now confess the truth: Christ is the Savior.

Answer: Many, in denying the truth, have stumbled over this stone. We must therefore consider all the more carefully what snake is hidden in the grass. Everything depends on this small difference—even if that small difference were ten times smaller. To subscribe to this is tantamount to transferring into the church of the antichrist, thus uniting oneself with that people who persecute the church of the Lord Jesus and have shed the blood of the saints as water. You thus bring upon your soul all the blood of the saints, and you are guilty of all the persecutions as if you yourself had performed them personally. You will not escape the wrath of God over the blood of His saints. Yes, even if they did not require a declaration from you, the attendance of the mass, or the rendering of any reverence to their images, being satisfied that you have left the Church of the Reformation and called yourself a member of the Romish church, then you would have denied Christ, His truth, and His church, and you would have transferred into the bloody empire of the antichrist. Even if you then confess the name of Christ, you are denying Him in deed. Why else do they persecute those who confess Christ in word and deed? They nullify the efficacy of Christ's one perfect sacrifice by sacrificing Him daily unto the forgiveness of sins, and by denying that Christ has also paid for

actual sins committed subsequent to baptism. They worship a piece of bread as if it were the glorified Jesus, which is just as much a total denial of Christ as transpired during the persecutions of the heathen. Therefore, give heed. If, however, one goes further than that and attends the mass, bowing before the god of bread and the images, the excuse will not hold that you do it only with the body and not with the heart, for God also wants to have the body (1 Cor 6:20). God requires a confession; however, to behave in such a manner is a denial before men rather than a confession. Furthermore, it is hypocrisy when there is a contradiction between the heart and your deeds. Do not think that all this is but ceremonial. It is an actual deed—an act of idolatry which is expressly forbidden. “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them” (Exod 20:5). The faithfulness of the seven thousand who were left in Israel consisted in that they had not bowed their knees to Baal (Rom 11:4). The faith of the heart is of no value if the confession of the mouth differs from it. True faith and the confession of the mouth always go hand in hand. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart...thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9); “I believed, and therefore have I spoken” (2 Cor 4:13). Also the fact that you were compelled to do this will not absolve you before God. The love of Christ must influence you to such a degree and salvation must be worth that much to you that you will not permit yourself to be compelled and that you are willing to endure all torture for Jesus’ sake. Therefore be encouraged—the suffering which has transpired has already been eliminated and you do not know what suffering will yet come. Only your present suffering is reality and that transpires as rapidly as time passes. Live and let your care be for the day, for you know not what tomorrow will bring. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt 6:34).

Sixthly, there is yet another temptation which brings unrest in the soul: There are so many godly who traverse through this world with ease. They have rest, sit under their grape vine and fig tree, enjoy their possessions in peace, and die in faith. I, however, am plagued all the day, and I am chastened every morning. Why does it go so ill with me, whereas others fare so well? My answer is: “Is not the Lord sovereign? May He not do with His clay as pleases Him? Is it not grace that long since you have not been cast into hell?” It behooves us to embrace His sovereignty with love and to be in subjection to it without quarreling—especially since we know that all things must work together for good for those who are His (Rom 8:28), and that it is all goodness and love which He, according to His foreknowledge and determinate counsel, causes us to encounter. “For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). Do not be envious of the happiness of others. May not the Lord give as well as take? May He not give of His own to whomever He wills? Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? You

ought rather to rejoice that God shows you that He is good. Above all this, however, the Lord shows you greater goodness than all those who spend their days peacefully according to the body. I shall not mention to you the illuminations of the Holy Spirit, the kisses of the Lord Jesus, the sweet comforts, the submissive dispositions, and the disposition of a martyr—all of which the Lord visits you with at times. There are others who spend their days in darkness, weakness of faith, and in the commission of many spiritual sins—even though they prosper according to the body. Is the body therefore more than the soul, and the prosperity of the body more than the prosperity of the soul? God on the contrary bestows upon you the greatest favor which a creature on earth can enjoy; that is, to be a witness for Jesus, to show that love toward Jesus can overcome everything, that many waters cannot quench love, to be engaged in battle as a champion against the antichrist, and to anticipate the crown of martyrs. It is the purpose of man to glorify God. The more someone answers to His purpose, the happier he will be. Each of you are more to the glory of Jesus, however, than a thousand others of the godly. Therefore be well-satisfied with your portion and rejoice in it. Thank the Lord that He has deemed you worthy to be martyrs.

Seventhly, the last temptation which I shall propose is this: “My suffering is too severe and it lasts too long; I can no longer bear it and I will yet come to the point where I will be guilty of denial. And besides that, I am very oppressed, since I have been deprived of my loved ones. They have recanted, and my children have been put into monasteries and are raised in an idolatrous environment. Wretch that I am; where shall I flee and what shall I do? I am at the end of my rope.” You ought to know that you deem your cross to be too heavy and its duration too long. The fear for suffering prior to its arrival is more severe than the suffering itself. When we are subject to it, and when God calls us to be a martyr, He generally also grants a martyr’s spirit. If you become discouraged at times, the Lord will again grant courage and will comfort the soul with inward grace. When grace fills the soul, suffering is no suffering. If Jesus comes in view and His love kindles the love of the soul, you will step over the mountains of suffering as if they were molehills. God knows how much you can bear, and He will not tempt you above that you are able to bear. He will either moderate your cross according to your strength or increase your strength in accordance with your cross. With the temptation the Lord will grant deliverance, doing so by granting you to be content with His will so that His grace is sufficient for you and you can glory in your infirmity, and so that you will “take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake,” being strong when you are weak (2 Cor 12:10). It can also be that He will make the cross lighter and give you some breathing room, for it is all inflicted

upon you *by* men, but not *of* men. It is inflicted upon you by God who has counted the hairs upon your head. As He sends it to you in love to glorify you, so He can also diminish your cross—be it by entirely delivering you from it or by setting you at liberty, all things being possible to Him. Or He may also translate you into glory, saying, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt 25:21). As far as being deprived of your loved ones and their recantation is concerned, it is true and it aggravates your suffering. Jesus must, however, also be worth that much to you. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt 10:37). Thank the Lord that you have some in this world who are dear to you, so that by forsaking them you may demonstrate your superior love to Jesus. As far as the recantation of so many thousands is concerned, it is indeed true that they are wretched, for they have denied Jesus. Next to the Reformation, however, the antichrist has not received a heavier blow than the one inflicted by their recantation, for thereby a great multitude is now intermixed with popery who hate popery in their heart, and through them more light is kindled among the papists. They perceive the inferiority and falsehood of their religion as well as the veracity of the Reformed religion. They are capable of turning away from popery and transferring to the Reformed camp when times change—a change which is imminent. As far as your children are concerned who are confined to monasteries, God will care for them according to His immutable covenant, namely, “to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7). The Lord is providing for them as far as their sustenance is concerned, and preserves them from the many vanities of the world in which they otherwise perhaps would have drowned. He can preserve them in the truth, or, if they are not acquainted with the truth as yet, reveal it to them. If one day times change, God will then cause them to acknowledge, confess, and experience the truth. Let there be much prayer for them and surrender them to a faithful Lord. Therefore let nothing disturb you, and in all things prevail as a champion. Let none of these things move you, and neither count your life dear unto yourself (Acts 20:24); “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10); “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim 6:12).

My beloved brothers, from whom the luster of glory emanates, permit me to encourage you to be valiant and steadfast. If you are not in need of such encouragement, being sustained by the Spirit of liberty Himself, having striven valiantly until now, it is nevertheless my duty and inclination to share with you what the Lord has granted me. Permit me therefore to show my love to you, so that I

may hear in the Day of Judgment, “I was in prison, and ye came unto Me” (Matt 25:36).

First, consider the examples of so many thousands of martyrs who, striving uprightly, have received the crown of glory and who are now triumphant in heaven. It is God’s way throughout all ages to call some to be blood witnesses in order that the Lord Jesus may be glorified, the world be brought under conviction, and the church be strengthened. If I may understand something about the Revelation of John, it appears to me that the *fourth* vial is now being poured out and that the *fifth* vial is about to be poured out upon the throne of the beast (that is, Rome) which not long after that is destined to be destroyed, whereby the empire of the antichrist will be obscured. Some time subsequent to this, the beast himself will be eradicated and a glorious state for the church will follow upon this. It thus appears to me that you are among the last who have the privilege of being martyrs for Jesus. I repeat, “among the last,” for I believe that the church, also in other lands, must expect persecutions—however, they will be short. Therefore do not succumb in the end, but take as an example of suffering and steadfastness all who in former times have been martyrs for Jesus’ sake—who were persecuted, tortured, and killed by Jews, the heathen, and the antichrist for the name of Jesus. In all this, however, they remained conquerors, kept the faith, and confessed Jesus until the very end. It would be an impossible task to enumerate all their glorious testimonies, severe and lengthy suffering, valor, and faithfulness. This is not subject matter for a single letter. I shall only present the register recorded in Heb 11:35–39. “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith,” etc. Behold, such was the steadfastness of the martyrs—yes, many having too great a desire for martyrdom have imprudently offered themselves, did not hesitate to encourage the martyrs engulfed in flames, and at times would cry out, “I am also a Christian.” Women would even hasten to the places where believers were gathered, having heard that the enemies were on the march to murder them all. These women would be fearful that they would come too late; they also took their children along so that they also would be privileged to become martyrs in their youth. Would you then succumb who are called to martyrdom? Will their steadfastness not stir you up to endure everything—as they did—steadfastly and resolutely for the name of Jesus? The greater the suffering, the greater will be the

glory. Do as the companions of Daniel did, who would not worship the image upon the command of Nebuchadnezzar, and said to him, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we shall not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan 3:16–18).

Secondly, compare your suffering for a moment with eternal glory. What do you have to lose? You will say: “Honor, possession, father, mother, children, conveniences—yes, even life.” And what have you to suffer? You will say, “Hunger, cold, nakedness, stinking prisons full of abominable vermin, heavy chains, bloody labor, merciless beatings, scarcely being able to lie down to get a little sleep—and then in the end to be abused, burned, hung on the gallows, and to be eaten of dogs.” Know, however, that all these are but light tribulations which will readily pass. Paul refers to them as such in 2 Cor 4:17. Will recantation yield you all those desirable things again, and will recantation enable you to flee all these miseries? You yourself know that such is not the case. If by recanting you would get that wish, and you then would have an unbearably turbulent conscience which would not give you rest day nor night; and the wrath of God filled your soul with terror and anxiety and your body with painful stones, with unbearable gout, with evil sores, with painful discomfort, exhausting you to the very bone so that you would then seek death without being able to find it; or your wretched soul, having been restored to all freedom, perhaps in all luxury, would depart with the sense of hellish agony some days after you had recanted, would you then have gained anything? Be assured that as soon as you would have recanted, you will regret it, and you will wish and seek to be in that state again. By their fallen cheeks, their dejected countenance, and the pallor of death, it is to be perceived how the internal condition is of those who have denied Jesus and retained their possessions. They elevate your state a thousand times above theirs. You are now in this state and you cannot recover what has been lost. The wrath of God would pursue you if you again regained everything. The presence of your wife and children would only aggravate the distress of your soul. The avoidance of the water would be the equivalent of jumping into the fire, and all would at last end in damnation. Be assured—for experience teaches this daily—that the enemies do not believe your recantation. You would still be hated by them, for they seek after your life. Is it then not better to remain steadfast in your confession of Jesus, since you cannot gain anything by recantation? And if you could gain the whole world with it and would do injury to your soul, what would you give as a ransom for your soul? “For whosoever will save

his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt 16:25).

Place eternal glory over against all your suffering and the pleasures of the world, and you will come to the same conclusion as Paul did: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). Oh, how blessed, how sweet, and how glorious it will be, regardless of what the manner of your death may be, to be ushered into heaven by the holy angels after death! Oh, how all the inhabitants of heaven will arise when they witness the triumphant entrance of a valiant champion of the faith who has overcome! How friendly will be the manner in which the Lord Jesus will welcome such a soul! What joyous hallelujahs will resound because of your victory! It exceeds our understanding. Our tongue is too weak. No eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, and it has never arisen in the heart of men what God has prepared for those who love Him—and particularly for His faithful blood-witnesses. The inheritance of the saints in glory, the immediate communion with God, the life of beholding Him, to be satisfied with the Lord’s all-sufficiency, to be irradiated by the light of His countenance, to be embraced by His love, to be surrounded by His omnipotence, to be filled with His goodness, even to shine forth in pure holiness, to be aflame with love, to be incomprehensibly joyful in God, to be among the angels, to be in the company of the souls of the most perfectly righteous men, and while being in His immediate presence, together with them behold and experience the perfections of the Lord, and thus magnify and praise these perfections—that is felicity and that is glory. To be united with one’s own and yet glorified body; to be conformed to the glorious body of Christ; to stand at the right hand of King Jesus in view of the entire world—particularly of those who have tortured and killed them; there, according to soul and body, to be glorified and crowned as conqueror; to be ushered into heaven by the Lord Jesus and there to eternally experience undiminished fulness of joy without end and without fear—all this is the great benefit which the Lord has laid away for all those who fear Him and put their trust in Him before the sons of men. Attentively consider the following passage: “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number...stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;...What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed

them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev 7:9, 13–17). Now compare all your suffering and all that is glorious and delightful upon earth with this eternal and felicitous glory, and you will not be able to make a mental comparison, since the difference is too great. Would this then not cause you to rejoice in your suffering? Will this not make you courageous in the warfare in which, by the power of God, the victory is sure and the crown a certainty?

Thirdly, view the Lord Jesus from every perspective. He is so eminently glorious that it is our greatest glory to confess Him as our Lord and King. We are therefore not to be ashamed of Him. God the Father makes confession about Him by declaring from heaven, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The angels bore witness to Him at His death and resurrection—yes, all angels worship Him. How boldly and joyously have all martyrs professed Him and sealed their profession with their death! Would you then be ashamed of Him? Is He not worthy of a measure of suffering? He is worthy a thousand times to be professed by you while suffering in some measure. How much good has He done for you! Out of love for you He left His glory, took upon Himself your human nature, doing so in the form of a servant, became poor so that He had nothing upon which He could lay His head, and took upon Himself your sins and put Himself in your stead as Surety. How heavy a task it was for Him to deliver you from eternal damnation, to reconcile you with God, and to lead you to glory! God’s wrath upon sin caused Him to crawl over the earth as a worm and to wallow in His own blood—blood coming forth as sweat due to the hellish agony within His soul. He was betrayed, shackled as an evildoer, and led away captive. The ecclesiastical authorities judged Him worthy of death as a blasphemer of God, He was beaten with fists, and they spat in His blessed countenance. He was smitten in the face, and He was mocked in a most contemptuous and grievous manner. He was delivered to the Gentiles, dragged from the one court to the other, led along the streets of Jerusalem with a robe of mockery, placed on a duo with a murderer, and had His death demanded as if He were the most wicked among the people. He was scourged in a most wretched manner and crowned with a crown of thorns, which was pounded into His head with sticks. He was led outside the city while bearing His cross, and died on the cross in the greatest distress of soul while suffering the most extreme measure of scorn and pain. All this He suffered out of love for you in order to deliver you from sin and damnation. He made a good profession, namely, that He was the King and the Savior—a confession which cost Him His life. Would you now be ashamed of Him and deny Him? Would you not suffer somewhat for this loving and loveable Jesus, and not show by your suffering how dear and precious He is to you? The Father, in consequence of His suffering, bestowed this honor upon Him: “And

that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11). Would you then withdraw yourself from the opportunity to render Him glory? Would you, in response to all His love and goodness to glorify you, defame Him, be ashamed of Him, and deny Him? Far, far be it from anyone that this would arise in one’s heart. Therefore let the love of Christ constrain you, and let nothing be so precious to you that you would not be willing to set it aside for Him, thus to glorify Him by way of a bold profession. Rejoice in the fact that you still have a body and a life to demonstrate thereby that you love and honor Him. Be joyful that your suffering continues somewhat longer, so that your profession should continue that much longer, and you should glorify Him for a lengthy period of time upon earth.

Fourthly, acknowledge the grace which God has manifested toward you. Others He permits to remain choked in sin, permitting them to walk on the way to destruction. However, He has bestowed the riches of His grace upon you. How wondrous are the ways by which He has drawn you to Himself! Every deed and every step is an evidence of His love. Reflect upon the entire way along which the Lord has led you since your youth. His eye remained upon you when you departed from Him. He was longsuffering when you persevered in your stubbornness. All the day He stretched forth His hands to you when you were gainsaying. He allured you, drew you with love, convinced you of your wretched state, revealed His Son to you, gave you faith whereby you received Jesus as your Surety, made you a new creature, gave you a new heart, and caused you to walk in His holy ways. How frequently has He comforted you and spoken to your heart! He enabled you to remain faithful when He called you to suffer, has sustained you hitherto, and kept you in the faith by His power. He grants you His Spirit which makes you bold and courageous, and makes you willing in the day of His power in the beauties of holiness. He gives you power when you are faint and increases your strength when you have no might. At times He causes you to behold the crown and causes you to taste how good it is to be near to God. He causes you to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world and addresses you as follows: “My son, be valiant, be of good courage, and fear not, for I am with you. Be not perplexed for I am your God. I take hold of your right hand, strengthen you, and sustain you with the right hand of My righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:2). Will not all this divine benevolence kindle your love, so that you will say, “I shall cleave to the Lord; He is my portion and therefore I shall hope in Him. I surrender my body and soul to Him; let Him do with them as pleases Him. May He but give me faithfulness as I presently suffer

for His Name's sake, and may He make me steadfast to valiantly endure all that is yet to come. For nothing will befall me except it be through His hand. I look beyond my enemies, for God commands them as follows: "Curse David, and inflict such and such upon him." That—and no more—will they be able to do to me." Therefore, as champions of God, be vigilant and strong, and the Lord will strengthen your heart.

Fifthly, the faithful profession of Christ and His truth is of an unspeakably great advantage for the church in general as well as for specific individuals. The church will not be eradicated by torturing and putting martyrs to death, but she is built up by it. When persecutions for the Word's sake come about, the church is purified, the chaff blows away, the gold is separated from the dross, the luster of the church becomes brighter, and she inspires more awe in the eyes of the world. The church is much more glorious when she is small and pure than when she is a large, mixed multitude. If in the one locality the church is eradicated due to having been thoroughly corrupted, the number of the truly godly being extremely small, and there being practically nothing left, she will raise her head in a different locality all the more gloriously. If there were as yet many godly left, their dispersement would grant them the opportunity to let their light shine in other localities. Every individual believer becomes, so to speak, a minister and establishes a little church in those localities where he resides—as occurred during the persecution of the church recorded in Acts 8:4. It is true that prospects are gloomy and will even become more gloomy. Furthermore, I believe that other churches will also be refined by persecutions. I am assured, however, from the Word of the Lord, that the antichrist will no longer have dominion in such a general sense as in the past. The Lord will preserve for Himself a portion that will persevere and not lose courage. Rather, they will remain standing as champions and battle against the antichrist with the word of their testimony until the Lord—one day, suddenly and unexpectedly—will pour out His judgments upon him and will glorify the church.

Brothers, you are the pillars of the church. You are the voice whereby the glory of the Lord Jesus is declared and your testimony resounds throughout the world. See to it, therefore, that you remain steadfast, for every eye is upon you. Thus, the enemies will not be able to rejoice, and the godly will neither be put to shame nor be grieved for your sake. Your steadfastness causes many to come to themselves, and they begin to seek after the truth of the gospel. Who knows how many children you will beget in your bonds! Those who stumble along are strengthened, and those who for fear have succumbed and recanted when the *first* storm arose, will, by reason of your steadfastness, become bold to reverse their recantation and by renewal to strive and suffer for the truth. Due to your steadfastness the enemy will have much more work than he had first anticipated.

Maybe God, who brings forth new martyrs by the thousands, will cause your church to arise from its ashes to the remorse of her enemies. For indeed I anticipate something great from the restoration and steadfastness of such an innumerable multitude. When fire is restricted, it will burst forth all the more vehemently. If the enemy would have left alone those who by renewal united with them and would have been satisfied with their recantation, then the church in that locality would, humanly speaking, be finished. However, now there is yet hope. Behold therefore what a great matter the Lord has entrusted to you! Those who have become bold by your steadfastness would again succumb due to your cowardice and recantation. Therefore, quit yourselves as men and you will prevail with your testimony.

Sixthly, and as far as you personally are concerned, has not your martyrdom yielded you much benefit? Prior to this you lived in, or rather fell into, many sins which now do not have the least effect upon you. Perhaps some of you have been converted who were unconverted while enjoying freedom. Some of you who for fear have denied the truth now courageously endure everything. Has not your knowledge of divine truths increased and become more spiritual? Has not your heart become holier? Have not your prayers become more vehement? Do you not have more frequent and intimate communion with God? Do you not see more of God's friendly countenance? Do you not enjoy more comfort? Are you not able to rejoice more in the hope of glory, and has not all that is of the earth decreased in value in your eyes? And even if there come days of darkness, weakness of faith, and strife, are not your wrestlings that much stronger and does not the Lord time and again strengthen your soul? Would you be willing to exchange your condition for the crown of a king and all the luxuries of the ungodly? Observe therefore and gratefully acknowledge the grace which God bestows upon you. Oh, how precious you are in the eyes of all the godly throughout the world! How many texts are there not in the Bible which declare you blessed! Permit me to bring them to your remembrance. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Pet 4:14); "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt 5:11-12). Consider Paul's triumphant declaration shortly before his death as a martyr: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8). Lift up your heads; by faith make the words of Paul your own, and emulate him by saying, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that

died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:33–39).

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be courageous in the battle. Do not withdraw yourself from the battle, and do not surrender one inch, for the more you capitulate, the more your enemies will exact of you. They are never satisfied. It is safer to stand firm in a matter, in which you in certain circumstances would perhaps concede, and which stand could be called impudent, than it is to concede too much. You will be more secure and avoid many snares. Your conscience will enjoy ten times more peace concerning the *first* than over the latter. The more courageous you are, the more the enemy will lose courage, the more you will gain in strength, and the more glorious will be your victory. Let them do with your body as they please, or rather, what God wills that they will do to you, and, with David, strengthen yourself in the LORD your God.

Possess your soul in patience—of which you are truly in need. Arm yourself against any desire for revenge even entering your heart. Yes, even if you could avenge yourself, do not do so, but be as a sheep that is dumb before her shearers. Pray for those that persecute you, and reward them good for evil. Let the Lord Jesus continually be an example for you in order that you may follow His footsteps. The weapons in our battle are not carnal, but nevertheless are strong Godward. Arm yourself therefore with the entire armour which the apostle proposes in Eph 6. The meek person is to be preferred over the strong person. Patience not only reduces the suffering, but it yields luster to the one who is patient, and it convicts and even conquers the enemies. Consider therefore that time is short, and that your suffering is transitory. It proceeds from the hand of the Lord and is to the glory of Jesus. Let patience therefore do her perfect work; that is, suffer all things with quiet patience for the duration of this suffering, for the victory and the crown will ensue.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58). Be faithful unto death and the Lord will give you all the blessings which He promises to those who overcome. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise

of God. I will give thee a crown of life. He...shall not be hurt of the *second* death. To him...will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it; to him will I give power over the nations: Confession, and conduct and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. The same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. Him...will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name. To him...will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev 2 and 3). Behold, such are the invaluable promises which God makes relative to faithfulness and the endurance of a small measure of suffering. Therefore, be faithful unto death. I conclude with the benediction of the apostle: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you, Amen” (1 Pet 5:10–11).

Beloved brothers who are adorned with glorious, divine luster, I remain with my whole heart, *Your loving fellow brother in Christ.*

Final Exhortation to Believers

Citizens of the Netherlands, we shall now turn again to you. If this discourse has stirred up your heart and you have become desirous to confess the Lord Jesus, make work of this at once. You are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation which neither knows God and the way of salvation, nor has a desire after godliness. Come out from among her, having as your objective to confess Jesus by a godly life, so that every one may come under conviction by reason of your self–denial, humility, meekness, love, and good–naturedness; and so that everyone may perceive the heavenly nature which is within you. Speak of Christ, of the necessity and efficacy of His suffering, and of the nature of faith and regeneration.

Join yourself to the godly so that it may become manifest that you are one with them in your support for Christ and your opposition to the world. Remain with the true church and be diligent in attending public worship and in partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Thereby one confesses the Lord Jesus. To separate yourself

from her and to remain on your own is a quiet denial of Christ and His cause. If shame and injury come upon you due to your confession, rejoice in this, for it is a small beginning of martyrdom.

When the Lord brings persecution upon the church by the world, if errors are stubbornly adhered to in the church and if she persecutes such ministers and others who promote the truth and godliness—then oppose such and be a companion of those who fear the Lord and profess His truth. If you are cast out by those who persecute you, are compelled to join them, are robbed of your possessions due to refusal to do so, are cast into prisons, are treated as criminals—yes, are threatened with the sword, the gallows, and torture, or even put to death—then pause for a moment and reflect upon the fact that the Lord calls you to martyrdom. It is one and the same thing whether persecution takes place by those from within or from without by the antichrist. Your confession is the same, your faithfulness is the same, and your reward is the same. Do not be disturbed if men cause you to suffer under an evil name, for that is an old practice. The Lord Jesus was also persecuted and killed due to an evil reputation, for they said, “We do not stone thee for any good work, but for such and such a reason.” The old pretenses are: “You are disobedient to your government, you are resisting her, you are instigating rebellion, you are causing schism in the church, and you are promoting soul-damning errors and heresies, seeking to promote them. Enough of this fuss; away with him.” I repeat, do not be troubled concerning them, but remain steadfast in cleaving to the truth, as well as in bearing witness to it in words, conduct, and suffering.

If persecutions proceed from the antichrist, you are permitted to flee as far as you can in order that you may be spared for better circumstances. However, do not flee where you feel you can best get through the world, but whereto the godly flee, where there is a church, or wherever there is a possibility to institute one. Do not esteem worldly possessions that highly that you would bring yourself into danger for them.

One may flee the persecutions of the antichrist; however, you may not do so if persecutions arise within the church, where the antichrist already has been eliminated and cast out—who now does nothing else but quarrel with fire and sword. One may not flee persecutions arising within the church, but must stay in order to bear witness against the persecutors—and if necessary, to seal the truth with his death. New persecutions require new martyrs. If, however, we cannot escape the hands of the antichrist by way of fleeing, we must know that God calls us to bear witness to His

cause and to remain steadfast. When speaking of fleeing, we do not understand this to refer to ministers and elders. The exception is when their congregations, in fleeing, call them to accompany them and they thus remain with their congregations. Otherwise, they must remain with their congregations as long as they remain in those localities and are in a condition for them to do service there, even if it means the sealing of the truth with their death before their eyes.

In order to arm yourself against persecutions—whatever their nature may be—do the following:

(1) Read frequently the Word of God. Do so not only for the strengthening of your faith, but also to be confirmed more and more in the truth, and thus to be more qualified to fight and suffer for it. It is the sword of the spiritual soldier.

(2) Frequently read books about martyrs—be they either old or new ones—for then you will get a lively impression of their spirit and valor, as lively as if you were present. This will enliven the heart and give a desire for martyrdom, and if your turn comes, these well-known examples will be in your memory to strengthen you. You will also observe the mistakes they have made, providing you with good beacons of warning.

(3) Have much fellowship with the godly, speak together about giving witness both in times of peace and of persecution, and encourage each other.

(4) Pray frequently that the Lord may give you a bold spirit, knowing that if the Lord would withdraw His hand, you would not be able to stand, but that even a little fear would cause you to recant. Know your weakness and distrust yourself, however much you may currently be convinced of the truth. Cleave to the Lord so that you may be faithful in the hour of temptation.

(5) Frequently exercise faith in Christ in order to be assured of being a partaker of Him, and to learn by experience how good it is to be near to the Lord, so that faith may be all the stronger—also then when the feeling disappears and faith is assaulted from all sides.

(6) Be very diligent in sanctification, so that you may lead a blameless life and have a conscience void of offense before God and man, for “the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov 28:1).

 CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

Contentment

Since profession of the truth generally has an adverse effect upon one's temporal belongings, and since this impedes so many in being bold in their profession, it is therefore necessary that we endure such adversity by being content with the will of God in regard to temporal circumstances. This we shall now discuss.

The word "contentment" in Hebrew is $\psi\delta$ (*dai*), that is, fullness, abundance, and sufficiency. Frequently this word is attributed to God. The Lord calls Himself $\psi\sigma\#\lambda$) (*El Shaddai*); that is, the God who possesses everything and who is able to bring forth everything out of His fullness. It is generally translated as "the Almighty One." In Greek the word is $\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\rho\kappa\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (*autarkeia*) which is a coalescence of two words: "being sufficient" and "self." This is indicative of having sufficiency for ourselves or with ourselves, for no one can be content unless he has enough, and we have enough if we no longer desire anything. Thus, contentment does not consist in the multitude of possessions, but in the fulfillment of desire. If the desire is great, then much is needed for the fulfillment of this desire; if it is small, only a little will suffice. A little will fill a little bottle and much is needed to fill a large barrel. Man needs but little to live in the service of God, and if his desires are commensurate with what he needs, a little is sufficient to fill his desires and his stomach.

Contentment is a Christian virtue consisting in a correspondence between the desire of God's children and their present condition—this being true because it is the will of their God in Christ and according to His sovereign determination. In this they rest with delight, in quiet confidence, joyfully, and with gratitude, trusting that the Lord will cause the present and the future to turn out to their advantage. This causes them

to utilize their present condition to the advancement of their spiritual life and to the glory of God.

Contentment is a Christian virtue of God's children. The unconverted are to all good works reprobate and are not acquainted with the nature of this virtue. When they perceive it in God's children, they despise it as a low level of intelligence, day-dreaming, stoic insensitivity, and deem them unfit for loftier matters—this being a treasure which is hidden for them. God's children, however, have this virtue in principle, and they, perceiving the beauty of this virtue, make diligent effort to possess this in greater measure. The heart is the true seat of this virtue. Contentment is not a matter of words. It is not of a compulsory nature, nor does it consist in refraining from pursuing the goods of this world. It is not a mental determination to keep ourselves satisfied, but it is a disposition of the soul. The intellect, the will, and the affections are in a contented disposition, and out of this propensity actions issue forth which are consistent with this disposition. This disposition is only to be found in the children of God—in the godly. “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6).

The Object of Contentment

The object of contentment is our current condition. Believers, being and remaining in the state of grace, encounter many things according to soul and body. Sometimes the condition of both agree in a general sense with their desires, and sometimes there is a very great discrepancy between the two. It is easy to be content if the Lord grants the desire of the heart. If, however, our circumstances do not agree with our desires, it will be a difficult task to bring our desires in harmony with our circumstances. The Christian is exercised about this. Possessions do not yield contentment. Man can be either discontented or contented, irrespective of whether he is rich, of average means, or poor. One who is rich or one of average means must strive just as much to be contented with his state as the poor person in his. We may not strive to be in different circumstances, thinking that we shall then be better off. Rather, we must labor to conduct ourselves well in the condition in which we are. A poor person thinks, “If I were only of average means”; one of average means thinks, “If I were only rich”; a rich person, “If only I had more”; a single person, “If only I were married”; a married person, “If only I were single”; a sailor, “If only I had an occupation on shore”; a craftsman, “If only I were a businessman”; etc. These are foolish thoughts. Contentment does not consist in this, but in a being contented that the condition in which we are is best

for us. The exhortation is as follows: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5).

The Nature of Contentment

The nature of this virtue consists in there being harmony between our desires and our present circumstances. Man is not naturally self-sufficient; he is but a vessel into which something can be inserted. And, in order to be filled, he has desires which—as hands—reach out for that which he deems to be fulfilling to him. After the fall our desires have become inordinate, both in reference to the matters desired, which cannot fulfill, as well as to the manner desired; doing so too vehemently and passionately. This vice is still partially present in the children of God after regeneration and yields them much grief. They, even though they are judgmentally opposed to this, also desire much. They desire that all be well according to their aspirations. These are such, however, that they cannot be filled with that which is of the earth, whereas their desires ought to be moderated according to the good which they have—be it much or little.

We must not eliminate all desires—as if the absence of desire would constitute true contentment. That would be to dehumanize man and to make him less than an animal. Our desires must be contrary to that which is evil. That which is evil must be a burden to us, must grieve us; one must feel pain under it, and must have the desire to be delivered from it. That which is good must be desirable to us and our desires must be focused on its enjoyment. We must pursue these desires by using those means which are subservient to this. Thus, contentment neither excludes the having of desires nor the use of the means, but it excludes all those desires which are focused on sinful matters. This relates to all desires for all that which exceeds our needs; all vehement and passionate desires for something which normally could be lawfully desired; all mental anguish, heartache, and pouting if things do not go our way; and the use of all evil means for the fulfillment of our desire—whereby all lawful means are neglected, and God is tempted.

However, all of this does not yet constitute contentment. Contentment consists in the *correspondence* of our desires with our present circumstances, and in a willingness to be in the circumstances wherein we are and in none other. Prior to being in such circumstances we may indeed have desires (a matter which we deem to be essential); however, we must do so with a true and righteous judgment. Also, if we come into difficult circumstances, we may then indeed desire to be delivered from them and to come

into better circumstances. This is not contrary to being contented. However, while we are in our present circumstances—whether they be good or evil—we must be content with the present and regulate our desires in harmony with the conditions in which we presently are. Even natural men—who adhere to a *fatum stoicum* (that is, *it must be this way; nothing is to be done about it*)—being desirous to quiet themselves, say, “If one cannot do what he wishes, then one’s wishes must be according to his ability.” Thus even they demonstrate that contentment consists in a correspondence between desires and current circumstances. The godly have much more reason to regulate their desires according to their circumstances and to cause their will to be in harmony with this—it being the will of God. This is not only applicable to the physical but also to the spiritual. To be contented when things do not go according to our wishes is a difficult task in both respects; however, this is much more true in the spiritual realm. If we are in spiritual darkness, suffer from spiritual desertion, are spiritually assaulted, and are subject to the power of corruption, then we must also be content and regulate our desires according to our circumstances. We must do so not because such circumstances are desirable to us or ever could be, and not because we should not endeavor to be delivered from them, but because it is the will of God not to give us more grace presently, since it pleases Him to lead us along that way to salvation and the glorification of His Name.

The Foundation of Contentment

The foundation upon which our present circumstances are based, and why we are satisfied with them is *because that such is the will of our God in Christ Jesus, and He has directed these circumstances to be thus*. Man cannot love that which is grievous and desire it as such. Rather, there is a different reason why believers embrace current circumstances which are evil and grievous—the reason being that it thus pleases God. It is one thing to appease ourselves simply because our condition is according to God’s will (which cannot be opposed), and that all must yield to God’s power and hand. Then there is not *a desire that such be the case*, for the desires do not correspond with the circumstances. Rather, it is *a being compelled to acquiesce*, and this does not differ much from pagan *fate*. It is quite another thing to embrace the will of God as being most eminent in and of itself, and as desirable to them. In order for the will of God to be efficacious unto contentment, we must consider God to be our God—our reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The exercise of faith is of great significance here—be it while expressly receiving

Jesus as offering Himself, and thus coming unto God, or be it that faith is operative reflexively and with assurance concerning our state of grace. The exercise of faith is also of great significance when one may consider himself as being reconciled only by virtue of the propensity of faith, apart from a renewed manifestation of assurance, and when one only cleaves to Jesus in order to have a part in Jesus, thus coming to God through Him while exercising hope. The stronger faith is, the greater the contentment with the will of God will also be. This believing disposition engenders love toward God, and love acknowledges the majesty of God and the suitableness of subjection. Love engenders a delight in the will of God, and thus love for the will of God conquers and prevails over love for self. In the meantime, one will grieve over that which is evil; this may and must remain. The love toward God's good pleasure has the upper hand, however, and therefore the desires of the believer correspond with his circumstances. He will desire it to be so—even if it is with tears in his eyes—because the Lord wills it to be so. This will is precious to believers above everything else and makes all that is bitter to be sweet and that which is heavy, light. Observe this in the perfect example of the Lord Jesus: “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38); “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt 26:39).

The Effects or Fruits of Contentment

The effects or fruits of contentment are:

(1) *A being pleased* with given circumstances since it is the will of God. “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities” (2 Cor 12:10).

(2) *A quiet confidence*. This is not a being careless and insensitive, but an active embracing of the will of God which causes believers to be silent—not reluctantly or in discouragement, but in believing submission. “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Ps 39:9).

(3) *A cheerful or joyful disposition*. This does not pertain to one's tribulations as such. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11). The will of God makes that which is bitter sweet, however, and therefore the apostle says, “We glory in tribulations also” (Rom 5:3); “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2).

(4) *Gratitude*. A Christian views the hand of God as being the hand of a loving father. He knows from experience that it is good for him to be afflicted and that He afflicts in faithfulness. Therefore

he gives thanks to God in everything (1 Thess 5:18), and says with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

(5) *A resting and trusting in the Lord’s providence.* A contented person finds such delight in the will of God that he has neither concern for the present nor for the future, since he believes that God is his Father and that therefore all—whatever God brings upon him—will be well and to his advantage. He is therefore confident and well-satisfied. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust” (Ps 91:1-2).

(6) *Spiritual growth.* By way of contentment we shall escape many obstacles which hinder us in the practice of godliness. Malcontent either engenders many sins and keeps us in a sinful condition, or it impedes the practice of many virtues. By way of contentment we shall “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,” which will enable us to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:10). Only when we bear our cross with contentment, will the cross be to our benefit and we be sanctified by it (Heb 12:10). If we may glory in tribulation then tribulation will work “patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). Then the cross becomes a school. “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law” (Ps 94:12).

(7) *That God is glorified thereby,* for believers thus demonstrate that the Lord is sovereign and may do with His creature according to His good pleasure. They then manifest that God is all-sufficient and that, when having God, we can miss everything else. Then it will become manifest that God is good, faithful, true, wise, and omnipotent. “That the trial of your faith ... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:7); “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet 4:16).

The truth we have presented and explained is suitable to convict the unconverted of their evil condition and the godly of their deficiency and sin.

Discontentment: A Characteristic of the Unconverted

The unconverted are discontented.

(1) Something is always wrong. He either has no child or he has one too many. He has learned the wrong trade, for “if I were a storekeeper, knew a trade, or had such and such a skill, then I

would be much better off. In whatever I begin, I go against the stream; where will it ultimately end? Such and such get all the customers and enjoy love and esteem; however, they turn their backs upon me. Everyone opposes me; they shortchange me, deal with me and my family in an ungodly manner. They slander me, rob me of my honor, and everyone is after me.” They are always surrounded by bears so that neither day nor night can they find rest due to external and internal unrest.

(2) Another person may be lethargic and lazy—and thus insensitive.

(3) Another person has a sweet and tender disposition and can endure everything.

(4) Others use reason and perceive how matters are, or else they perceive that there is no way out. Therefore, *patience par force*; that is, there is nothing to be done about it. Or they will engage themselves in such a manner that all will go well.

(5) Others, when the shore eludes them, hold on to a floating patch of grass and occupy themselves with one thing or another.

(6) Others become completely discouraged and despondent and would be inclined to hang themselves in order to bring their suffering to an end.

(7) Others, even though they can handle the present, are concerned about the future. Every evil tiding causes them to tremble, robbing them of the peaceful enjoyment of the present.

(8) Others want to find their satisfaction in eating and drinking, money, prestige, and the gratification of their sinful lusts.

(9) Others seek gratification in the work of their hands and burrow as moles in the earth to derive their gratification from that. Or they seek it in men by being obsequious, flattering, and by worshiping them in order to gain their favor. Every unconverted person seeks rest in this manner without finding it, and his contentment is nothing but unrest.

(10) Another will fare somewhat better and, according to his saying, is satisfied with the will of God—even though he has never sought nor obtained reconciliation with God and therefore cannot expect God’s help or favor.

All whose disposition agrees with what has just been stated ought to know:

(1) That you are without God and Christ, and that God is not for you, but against you. If He stirs things up, who will then quiet matters down? If He forsakes you, what will then be of assistance to you? Then you cannot but be filled with fear—within and without.

(2) That all your tossing and turning, and all your contentment

and discontentment, are nothing but sin and filth in which you wallow as a swine wallows in the mud. It makes you increasingly abominable in the eyes of God and increasingly a stench for the truly godly. And if you imagine your current circumstances to be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, the outcome of all that you pursue will have evil consequences for you and will issue forth nothing but discontent, sorrow, terror, apprehension, and fear—until eternal damnation will rob you of all that with which you now occupy yourself to some degree. The wrath of God and the fire of hell will then forever occupy you. Therefore, turn to the Lord and seek reconciliation with God in Christ. He will then be your satisfaction, and being satisfied in Him, all things will work together for good.

The Godly: Also Subject to Discontentment

I shall now address the godly. It is sad that those who have God as a reconciled God, who have chosen God to be their only and all-sufficient portion (while rejecting all that is not God), yet have so much discontentment, because they, both according to body and soul, do not fare in this world as their nature would desire to have it.

(1) Their eyes and heart look too much to that which is of the world; that is, to that which is lofty, beautiful, and good, as well as to food, drink, and clothing—as if that could yield them any satisfaction.

(2) They also want to have their way, and if this does not occur and men do not yield to them, they are sorrowful, fretful, and angry.

(3) They eat their bread with discontentment since the quantity and the taste is not such as they would desire it to be.

(4) They tremble and quiver as far as the future is concerned. They say, “What shall we eat and wherewithal shall we be clothed?”

(5) Anxiety troubles the heart, and concerns take away the joy of life.

(6) They waver in regard to God’s providence.

(7) They immediately perceive God as being angry with them.

(8) They reject their spiritual state.

(9) They make themselves vulnerable to the assaults of the devil who then easily gets hold of them, tossing them to and fro.

(10) Spiritual life will lose its vigor, and if the Lord were not faithful and immutable, they would be corrupted in body and soul—so severely can worldly tribulations injure them. In such a condition they delight in being pitied and desire to be comforted, but in a manner concurring with the receipt of their desire—then

they would be encouraged. Sorrow must *first* disappear, the matter must *first* be attained, they must *first* see and possess that from which they will live, and then comfort will have an effect. Then they would be able to live carefree and serve the Lord.

The Godly Exhorted Not to Be Fretful

What shall I say? Shall I pity you? That I shall do, but in such a manner that I shall neither harm nor encourage you in your sin. Rather, I shall do so by stirring you up to overcome these unproductive anxieties, this wicked discontentment, and these concerns which drag you down.

First, as we uncover all this, you yourself will perceive that you are yet very carnal and that you focus your attention upon things which are insignificant. Are you then still of this world as others are whose portion is in this life? Is that which is of the world able to satisfy you? When you entered into the covenant of grace, did you not stipulate that whatever would befall you according to the body would be to your satisfaction, or did you change your mind and have you rescinded this? Why should there be more concern for your body than for your soul? Why should bodily deficiencies be more grievous than the deficiencies of the soul? Be ashamed before God and man that you are yet so carnal.

Secondly, do you not perceive that this is idolatry? There is a secret departure from God, a neglect of depending upon Him, and a secret denial of God's providence. There is a secret accusation of cruelty and unwillingness on His part to care for you, of mutability, and of not being faithful to His promises. Under pretense of being concerned about necessities, there is a desire to rely upon temporal things and a living by bread alone—and even if one does not solely put his trust in temporal things, it is nevertheless partially true. God and the things of this world together must grant you satisfaction. Or else, do you serve God in order that He would give you temporal things? What an evil disposition this is! How far removed this is from Asaph's disposition: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Ps 73:25-26)! Upon coming before God, be therefore ashamed about your sinful disposition.

Thirdly, these concerns and anxieties which cause one to tremble issue forth from a proud heart—relative both to God and to man. It is pride *relative to God*, as it implies that one is worthy of something and that God is obligated to serve us according to our wishes. If one were truly conscious of his sinfulness and guilt, and

would reflect upon this, he would come to a lower place and sink away in amazement that God has still borne with us—yes, and has given us so much above others who have much less than we do—considering that we have sinned so grievously and are perhaps even more sinful than they are.

It is also a manifestation of pride *relative to our neighbor*, for we look toward those who are superior to us and ask, “Why not I as well as he?” Very seldom does the concern truly pertain to what is presently lacking, for as far as temporal needs are concerned, little suffices. Instead, it pertains to our lust to possess, to have as much as the other, and the retention of dignity by not being despised due to being poor and having to depend on the church or others. It is true that this, when considered in and of itself, should not be a matter of indifference to us. It is God’s will that we have desires for our well-being and that our journey through this world be with dignity. However, we must overcome and deny these desires when God wishes to humble us and keep us humble. Therefore, concealed under the cover of being concerned about necessities, dignity, and being able to serve God, is pride. God wishes to be served by the one while having a higher position in the world, and by the other while in a more lowly position. The will of God must be our delight in whatever circumstances we are. Discouragement about being in a lower position is nothing but pride. Therefore, become humble and you will be delivered from many unprofitable cares.

Fourthly, all your concerns are in vain and you will not gain one penny by them. God has already decreed from eternity how much you will have. There is a “convenient” portion (Prov 30:8) which God has appointed for everyone and which He gives at His time. No one will take away this portion from you nor will it be diminished. With all your concerns and anxiety you will neither add one nickel nor break or change the determinate counsel of God. There were covetous Israelites who gathered much manna; however, when they came home, they had no more than their measure. There were others who, either due to lack of strength or being at a location where not much had fallen, had gathered little. When they came home their measure was also full. The one had no leftovers and the other did not lack anything (2 Cor 8:15). “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek” (Matt 6:25, 27, 32).

Fifthly, you dishonor God and harm yourself, for by way of these

nagging concerns you show that it does not suffice you to have God alone as your portion and that you cannot be satisfied with Him unless you have as many temporal goods as you deem necessary. Would it not be a dishonor to a father who has sufficient wealth if he were to permit his children to suffer want in spite of their cries and supplications? Are you then not also the cause that others by means of your dissatisfaction and fruitless concerns would begin to think about the Lord in this manner, as if He had neither love, mercy, compassion, nor care for His children? You would glorify Him, on the contrary, if you would be satisfied with your present circumstances, and if your felicity consisted in the enjoyment of God Himself. As far as you yourself are concerned—you bring yourself into continual unrest, apprehension, fear, and anxiety. You rob yourself of delighting and rejoicing in God. You impede your growth, since your disposition displeases God, and renders you unfit to appropriately use the means for spiritual growth. Your concerns will cause the Word and your good inner motions to be choked, thus rendering them unfruitful (Matt 13:22). Unbelief has opportunity to surface and will toss the anxious soul to and fro. The desire for religious exercise decreases and free access to God is hindered. The thoughts that these adversities come upon you in God's wrath cause the soul to tremble. Thus, to a great extent quietness, dependence upon God, a childlike confidence in God, and walking with God disappear. Would you lose all this for a greater or lesser quantity of bread, for getting your way, for your own honor, and for the future, of which you do not know how it will be? Oh, these matters are too insignificant to permit the well-being of your soul to dissipate.

Sixthly, after the Lord will have delivered you from your perplexity—which He certainly will do in His time—then, due to your previous dissatisfaction and grumbling, you will have made yourself incapable of being truly grateful to the Lord, and a sense of shame about your prior distrust will cause your soul new grief. It can also happen that the Lord, upon having fulfilled your inordinate desire, will send a leanness into your soul. You will then be confounded and wish that you were in the previous strait when you were in a better spiritual condition. Therefore conduct yourself well while you are in a school in which you can learn much that you cannot learn in a time of prosperity. Take heed therefore, and be on guard not to be murmurers and complainers about your condition while walking according to your lusts (Jude 16). Rather, possess your soul in patience and be satisfied with the present. You will then be fit to serve the Lord in both prosperity and adversity.

Exhortation to Strive for Contentment

Therefore, children of God—either rich, of the middle class, of limited means, insignificant, poor, oppressed, or tossed with tempest—whoever you may be and whatever your circumstances may be, you are all in need of an exhortation, for no circumstances in and of themselves yield contentment. Learn to adjust your desires to your circumstances—regardless of what they may be—and do not endeavor to adjust your circumstances to your desires, for there would be no end to that. Cast dissatisfaction far away from you as being a harmful pestilence for your spiritual life, and possess your soul in contentment.

To that end you must first of all meditate upon all forceful exhortations. Hear them from the mouth of the Lord, speaking to you in this way: “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps 37:5); “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Ps 55:22); “Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5); “Therefore take no thought ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matt 6:31-32); “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isa 33:16); “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Pet 5:7). Do not readily pass over these texts, but give attention to each one—yes, to every individual word. Take note of these words as being addressed to you by the God of heaven. He not only commands you to take no thought, but also to be content. Does not the command of God suffice so as to motivate you to render obedience? Is not His exhortation sufficient to stir you up? Take also notice, however, of the promises which the omnipotent, good, and true God makes in addition to this: “He shall bring it to pass; He shall sustain thee; He shall not forsake thee; your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things; He careth for you.” Are the promises of God not enough for you? Would He say it and not do it? Therefore, be satisfied, delight yourself, and rejoice in His promises, which will most certainly be fulfilled. It is true that the Lord does not always fulfill His promises when we judge it to be most suitable for us. However, the Lord will most certainly do it at His time. It is thus best if we do not receive it at our time; there is yet something to be learned by us and we must *first* be capable of using the promises well. It is the Lord’s wisdom and goodness that He postpones the matter; however, the fulfillment is beyond doubt. He has not promised to give you a certain quantity, but rather as much as you will have need of. That

ought to be sufficient for you and He will most certainly give it to you. Therefore, “though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Hab 2:3). Even if you do not perceive any means by which or from where it will come, He is almighty. He can also do it without means and sustain you and your children without food. Or else He will provide the means—even if ravens would have to bring it to you; even if He would cause bread to rain down from heaven; even if He would have to multiply flour and oil; or even if He would have to close the mouths of the lions and cause the fire to have no power. Therefore, be still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Secondly, is not God, who is your Father, sovereign? Would you wish that He were not so? You will indeed reply, “No I am glad that He is so and do not wish to stand above Him. I approve of His sovereignty, and even if He were to kill me, I would worship His sovereign majesty.” However, here the will of God stands over against your will. You say, “I wish to have this,” and God says, “I do not wish to give this to you; such and such is the measure that you will have.” Whose will shall have the upper hand, however—God’s will or yours? Since you know that you cannot prevail against God, will you therefore fret and grumble, as children sometimes do toward their parents? That would indeed be a striving against God. Since He is sovereign, however, His will is supreme, and you approve of it with delight, subject your will to His will, and will what He wills. Delight yourself in your circumstances, since it is the will of God concerning you—especially since God is your Father to whom you pray daily, “Thy will be done.” Since you subject yourself to His will in prayer, should you then not also subject yourself to His will in His dealings with you—even if they are not according to your desires? Submit yourself therefore to God and glorify Him in doing so.

Thirdly, did not God, by saying, “I am your God!” cause Himself to be your portion so that you would enjoy all felicity in Him? If you have the all-sufficient One as your salvation, are you then still in need of anything else? Is He not better to you than a thousand worlds, a piece of money, or a piece of bread? Therefore, speak and practice what the godly did. “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him” (Lam 3:24). As you consider God—the only blessed God, the God of full salvation—to be your portion, turn to Him in times of distress, take refuge with Him, delight yourself in Him by faith—even if it pleases Him not to give you the measure of enjoying Him as you would desire. This is laid away for you in eternity. Delight yourself in having Him as

your portion, and let this satisfy you while foregoing the things of the world which you would desire to have. To that end, hold before yourself the example of Habakkuk: “Although ... the fields shall yield no meat ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord” (Hab 3:17-18).

Fourthly, the very God who has given you what is most precious to Him, namely, His own Son Jesus Christ, in order to deliver you from your wretched state and to bring you to eternal glory (which He has laid away as an inheritance for you (Rom 8:32))—would He permit that you would truly lack anything as far as the needs of your body? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” (Rom 8:32). Behold, Christ has been given you as a Savior, you are partakers of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, and salvation is your eternal inheritance. Is that not sufficient for you? Must a piece of money and a piece of bread yet be added to this before you will be satisfied? Be ashamed that you think such thoughts. Would He who has given you that which is superior and eternal deny you that which is needful for your body? Would not He who has given you your life and body, also give you food and clothing? “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment” (Matt 6:25). How do you dare to think such a thing? Therefore, be content with your present circumstances, and it will suffice you. Adjust your desires to your circumstances.

Fifthly, what is the world to you? What is it that you are so desirous for? What is it that you are so concerned about? Is it not all transitory? You yourself will not remain here eternally, and you, as well as all that exists in the world, do but exist for a moment. Why then do you trouble yourself so much about it? When death comes, it will not grieve you that you had so little in this life, nor will it render you joy if you had an abundance; you will not die any more peacefully because of it. If you were to consider every day as being your last and you were to imagine continually that you are presently dying, you would not be disquieted by whether you have either more or less—which you presently are doing. Therefore, remain focused upon the transitory nature of your existence and the insignificance of all that is of the world. Simultaneously focus upon the promises of God: He, as an added benefit, will bestow the things of the world upon you as you have need of them, and will care for you. You will then learn to be content.

Sixthly, has a godly person ever lacked anything? If you read the entire Bible, you will not find a single example. Consider your own case. God cared for you when you were small. He provided clothing for your convenience, breasts to be suckled, a bosom at which

you could be cherished, bread and clothing as you grew up, and He has nourished you from the moment of your existence until now. And when you came into perplexing circumstances, did He not frequently deliver you? Would God then cease at this moment? He who grants the young ravens food when they cry to Him, provides food for the birds of heaven and sustains all that lives, who grants the ungodly food and gladness, would He forget you? Would He refuse to give you that which you need? Therefore, be content, trust in Him, and be satisfied with His dispensation. Even if the measure is not according to your desires, it will be as much as you have need of. That is sufficient and that ought to be sufficient for you.

The Blessed Benefits Issuing Forth from Contentment

Seventhly, contentment engenders many good things. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28).

(1) *There will be a quiet spirit*, which is of great price in the sight of God (1 Pet 3:4). There will be a great inner delight. A contented person tramples upon all that is of the world, lives above that which is visible, and is beyond the reach of all the arrows of the enemies.

(2) *There will be alienation from the world*. Man by nature is greatly occupied with his body and with making provision for it by way of temporal things. There is still much to be found of this in a regenerate person. If, however, he becomes content with the will of God, he then begins to disassociate himself from the world and does not seek gratification in it, but sojourns in it as a stranger.

(3) *It is a state in which there is prayer and communion with God*. Since God is the believer’s portion he delights himself in this and observes God’s hand in all that he encounters, believing that it is to his advantage—even when a knife is used to cut open a boil. If he is in need of something, he prays in faith and believingly anticipates that which he has need of.

(4) *There is a frequent experience of the help of God*. To perceive that God looks upon him, hears his prayer, and delivers him, is ten times more precious to a believer, yielding him incomparably more joy than if he were to be translated from a state of extreme poverty to extreme wealth. This experience strengthens him in believing that the Lord will also deliver him time and again in the future. He who has delivered me from the bear and the lion will also deliver me from this Philistine. He who has delivered me from six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh.

(5) *There will be gratitude*. If we lack everything and see no way

out, and God then grants us His help, a piece of bread will taste better than all delicacies enjoyed in prosperity. Then a shelter behind which there is refuge against rain and wind is more delightful and convenient than a palace previously would have been. The soul then lifts herself up to the Lord, acknowledging Him as the Giver. Then the soul will rejoice in the Lord and acknowledge herself not worthy of the least of all the Lord's mercies. The confession will be, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Ps 103:2, 4).

(6) *There is a longing for the state of glory.* Then the believer will perceive that it is not to be found here below, but in heaven. He will therefore long to depart and to be with Christ. He will comfort himself with this expectation and will thus be strengthened and encouraged to endure all tribulations. He will then rejoice that rest has been laid away for him, and he will be hastening to enter into that rest.

(7) *There is the manifestation of holiness.* As the cares of this world are the thorns which choke the good seed, contentment likewise renders one fit to deny self, to be humble, to trust in God, to delight himself in God as being his portion, to freely own the Lord's cause, and to demonstrate that there is an all-sufficiency in God. Here is the fountain of all godliness.

Objection: Some may perhaps say, "I would indeed be content if I but knew that I was a child of God, that the Lord was near to me, and that He would cause me to sense His goodness."

Answer: This is as much as to say, "If I were only in heaven, I would be satisfied." No, we must find satisfaction here below in the will of God, by faith. Unbelief concerning your state issues forth from discontent and not from your lack. As long as you are not satisfied except your desire be fulfilled, so long will you also be tossed to and fro as far as your spiritual state is concerned, and your soul will be as "a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). In order for faith to be exercised, you must be content with the present, and upon being content you must then exercise faith; these two belong together. May the Lord grant you both!

Objection: Others will say, "The Lord does not hear me, I am not delivered, and my perplexity becomes greater all the time. How can I then be content?"

Answer: Do you now see that your contentment is contingent upon possession? No, not to possess and yet to be satisfied with the will of God, trusting that there will be deliverance—that is true contentment. The reason the Lord does not give it to you is because

you do not yet need it. The Lord wants to teach you to be content with Him alone. He wishes to guide you into the proper use of what is good. He wishes to comfort and help you in a different manner from what you would prescribe to God in your foolishness.

Guidelines for Learning How to Be Content

If you wish to learn how to be content, then practice the following:

- (1) Always consider what you deserve, and you will then be happy that you are not yet in hell.
- (2) Look at others, and you will not want to exchange your condition with theirs. The one will have much less, and will be much more wretched than you are according to the body and will be an example to you as far as contentment is concerned. The other person will be without grace, and you would certainly not wish to trade places with him.
- (3) Live only by the day and do not take upon you the difficulties of two, ten, or a hundred days. This would be too great a burden for you. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.
- (4) Your difficulty is perhaps not as great as you make it out to be—this in consequence of your desire being excessive. You must therefore make more of an effort to adjust your desire to your circumstances—considering it to be the will of God—rather than seeking to improve your circumstances in accordance with your desire.
- (5) Make use of the means with all diligence and faithfulness so that your conscience will not accuse you, and leave the outcome to the Lord. Trust in His promise and He will make it well.
- (6) Let your focus continually be upon heaven, and consider the insignificance of all that is upon earth. The nearer you are to God, the more you will be at a distance from the creature. Everything will pass away, but he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever.

 CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Self-denial

The denial of self issues forth out of love for the will of God, and a being content with that will. In Greek we have the word ἀπαρνέομαι (*aparneomai*), which is derived from ἀρνέομαι (*arneomai*). This means a total, complete, and radical rejecting and casting away of property and honor. It means a relinquishing dominion over, denial of, renunciation of, a not knowing or acknowledging something to be one's property, and thus a forsaking of and desisting from it (Heb 11:24). It is also referred to with other words, such as the *mortifying* of one's members which are upon earth (Col 3:5), *the putting off* of the old man (Eph 4:22), and a *crucifying* of the flesh with the affections (Gal 5:24).

Self-denial Defined

Self-denial is a Christian virtue, granted by God to His children, whereby they, out of love for God's will, neither give heed nor yield to their intellect, will, and inclinations insofar as they are in opposition to the will of God—and oppose and suppress them instead. They do so by a voluntary forsaking and rejection of all that pertains to their natural well-being, if God's cause demands such from them—this to the honor of God and the welfare of their neighbors.

Self-denial is, *first* of all, a *Christian virtue*. Pagans have observed that their inner peace has been disturbed by their lusts. Some therefore sought to extinguish them by way of reason and appeared to practice self-denial in regard to some things. However, it did not issue forth from the right motive—love for the will of God. They did not have the right objective in view, but rather it was a seeking of self (be it in a different manner from others), resting in this as their peace and seeking to be honored by men.

Their self-denial was thus a splendid sin which had a counterfeit luster, and was not accompanied by deeds.

Our reference here, however, is to the self-denial of a Christian as being exclusive of all inordinate self-love (and self-reliance which issues forth from this) and seeking of self. Such self-denial issues forth from love for the will of God and culminates in the glorification of God.

Secondly, *the moving cause of self-denial is the Lord* and not man himself. Man is too deeply immersed in self-love to be able to rid himself from it. And even if he could divorce himself from this, he would not be able to bring himself into the opposite virtuous disposition. Self-denial does not consist in a negation, but is rather a propensity. It is the Lord who grants this grace to His children, for He grants them spiritual life in regeneration (Eph 2:1; James 1:18). Through this virtuous disposition He causes them to be active and thus works in them to will and to do (Phil 2:13). He particularly works in them the mortification of sin: "... but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13). God, having given life in the soul, stirs up this life and renders it active by His prevenient and cooperative power. The believer, uniting himself by faith with Christ—and through Christ with God—takes hold of His strength as his own, and by reason of this received strength is active in mortifying sin within him. God is thus the original cause, and man having been affected by this power, is himself active in the casting out of sinful self-love and its consequences, as well as in purifying and adorning himself with the contrary virtue. "Let us cleanse ourselves" (2 Cor 7:1); "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do" (Phil 2:12-13).

Thirdly, *the subjects of self denial are the children of God*. The unconverted are void of all spiritual life and therefore the motions and operation of life cannot come forth from them. Rather, it is a gift to God's children as presently being in a converted and believing state. They are those who are Christ's disciples and follow Him (Matt 16:24). Self-denial does not consist in a few deeds, but is rather a propensity and disposition of the heart. Their heart has been turned away from self-love and a seeking of self—albeit imperfectly. The one has made more progress in this respect than the other. The stronger this disposition is, the stronger and more pure the deeds will also be. What is true for all virtues is true for this virtue: In their essence they have been infused by God and are strengthened by way of much exercise. This is the reason why the one progresses in the one virtue and the other in another

virtue. Once this virtue has become deeply rooted, the person who practices self-denial will have much inner peace. He will not so readily be enticed to entertain ulterior motives, or be envious, wrathful, and guilty of misuse of words—all of which frequently issue forth in a rash manner due to self-love and a seeking of self. He does not fear evil tidings, harm, or whatever may externally affect him, but is quiet and thoughtful, while at the same time engaging in his duty with boldness. All of these do not move him, and all that he does renders him pleasant to all—before God and before men.

Fourthly, *the object of self-denial is man himself*. God has created self-love in man, and mandates the exercise of this love in the *second* table of the law by giving command that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:39). After the fall, however, love has become entirely distorted, as it causes man to be opposed to God, to make himself as God, and wanting all to end in man. This principle governs fallen man in his operations, and he wants everyone to function toward him in harmony with this principle.

What Self-Denial is Not

One must not deny his *spiritual self*, that is, one's regenerated self, which Paul refers to as *I* in Rom 7:20. This is the sin of many true, but nevertheless weak, believers: Upon falling into a sin, the arising of a sinful thought, and an assault by the devil, they immediately reject their spiritual state and think, "I have no grace; I have deceived myself and it has been nothing more than imagination." To do this is to deny received benefits and in some measure a grieving of the Holy Ghost. This is a manifestation of pride, for it suggests that we are naturally much more virtuous than others, as well as that the former good spiritual frames, motions, and deeds had come about by our own strength. Therefore, refrain from rejecting your spiritual state; preserve what you have, and render honor to God.

One must also not deny his *natural self*; that is, the inclination to promote the well-being of the body or one's health, the inclination for food, drink, clothing, etc. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Eph 5:29). If, however, this inclination stands in opposition to Christ and His cause, we must deny all this and deem it to be but loss and dung.

We must also not deny the desire for *the well-being of our soul*, the fear of hell, the desire for faith, hope, and love, and a desire for communion with God and felicity. This was one of the erroneous arguments of the *Labbadists* whose activities the Lord has overturned.

They insisted that love for all this—since it would make us happy—should be rejected as impure and abominable before God and that one ought not to come to Christ with such love in order to become a partaker of Him. They insisted that one should *first* have died to and denied this, for else one would make Christ a servant of sin and of the sinner; or else, one should only come to Christ from the perspective of and out of love for the glorification of God for His very own sake. In this they hindered poor souls, as they would *first* teach the denial of love for these spiritual benefits and their salvation, bring them to view the glory of God and stir up love to glorify Him for His very own sake. Only then they would lead them to Christ. They thus misled longing souls, and made themselves guilty of the damnation of the souls of those who, as a consequence of this, have died unconverted among them. They thus opposed the Word of God which stimulates man, either by fear for evil or by a desire for salvation, to run to Christ and to believe in Him. For a more comprehensive treatment of this refer to our work *Doctrine and Life of the Labbadists*, beginning with page 15.

The Specific Aspects of Self-Denial

Instead one must deny his *sinful self*; that is, there must be a denial of the old Adam in general with all his motions and desires—whatever the nature and contrary to whatever commandment these motions may be, and whatever the faculty of the soul and of the body may be by which such motions are executed.

Specifically, one must, *first* of all, deny his *natural and darkened intellect*; that is, to refuse to make a rule of doctrine and life. We do so when we say, “I understand ‘x’ to mean this, and I cannot comprehend it any other way. This I may abstain from, this I may do, and this is not sin.” One then relies upon such argumentation. However, the natural man does not understand the things which are of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14). We must renounce this corrupt intellect and not give heed to or follow it. “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

Secondly, we must deny *our own will*. Man wants to have his own way—no matter what the cost. If he has an impure lust, it must be satisfied. If he has the lust of gluttony, it must be satisfied. He wants to do whatever pleases him, and he says, “Who is lord over me?” Others must also behave according to his wishes and, as a king, he would wish to prescribe laws and to have that all would end in him, as if he were a god. If this does not occur, he becomes

dissatisfied, envious, wrathful, and vengeful. The man who seeks himself thus becomes an abomination before God and man. The Lord Jesus said, "... not as I will" (Matt 26:39), and He teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done" (Matt 6:10).

Thirdly, we must deny *our inclinations*. Natural man is empty and desires to be filled. He does not know God as the all-sufficient One and he has no desire after God. His passions therefore focus on the creature and he says to whoever appears to be capable of entertaining him, "be thou my satisfaction." He does not cease desiring until he gets what he wants; and if he does not get it, he becomes restless and fretful. To such inclinations we must not yield. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you ... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11).

Fourthly, we must deny *our own honor*. There is no sin more common to man and more deeply rooted in the heart than a desire to be honored. Even if one has the most despicable disposition and even if his conduct is abominable, he nevertheless wishes to be honored and somewhat esteemed. In all that he does he has his honor in view, wanting others to acknowledge and treat him according to what he imagines himself to be and considers himself worthy of. He who fails to do so, or does something which appears to dishonor him, must expect his wrath. Such an objective and such a desire we must purge ourselves of. "Let us not be desirous of vain glory" (Gal 5:26); "Let nothing be done through ... vainglory" (Phil 2:3).

Fifthly, we must deny our desire for *possessions*. Man's corrupt nature focuses on the physical. He desires to possess much, puts his trust in it, and determines to live from it. If he lacks all this, he is discouraged; all his passions, objectives, and seeking are solely focused on possessions. If he acquires it, he is encouraged and rests in it. A person who denies himself, however, is satisfied with necessities and purges himself of a desire to have much. If he does not have much, he is well satisfied; and if he prospers, he does not set his heart upon it. We find the following exhortation in 1 Tim 6:8-9: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." If the cause of Christ requires it, the person who denies self will relinquish all that he has—even that which is needful—and deem all that stands in opposition to Christ to be no more than loss and dung, as Paul did (Phil 3:8).

Sixthly, we must deny our *friends*. Man will very readily cleave to another person who either loves or pleases him. Father, mother,

children, husband, or wife are very dear to the heart. God commands appropriate love in the *second* table of the law; however, we so readily make an idol of them, cleave to them in an inordinate manner, and rely upon and put our trust in them. The person who denies self purges himself of such inordinate cleaving—particularly if it draws him away from the genuine practice of religion and the profession of the Lord Jesus. Then he knows no father, child, or friend. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt 10:37); “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).

Seventhly, we must deny *our life*. It is the duty of a Christian to preserve his life. To cleave to it, however, as if it were tantamount to salvation and felicity itself—and thus to quake and tremble when thinking about death—issues forth either out of ignorance concerning eternal glory, from not believing that we are partakers of this, or due to a condemning conscience conveying to us that we shall be eternally damned if we die in such a condition. A Christian must therefore not be so attached to his life, but must by faith commend it into the hands of his Father and rest in this. If then the cause of Christ is at stake, and we must either forsake our life or forsake and deny Christ, the person who denies self will surrender his life and will be glad that he has something precious which he may yield to Christ. “If any man come to Me, and hate not ... his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26); “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself” (Acts 20:24).

The Motivation for Self-Denial: Love for the Will of God

The essence of self-denial is that its acts *ensue out of love for the will of God*. It is the believer’s desire *neither to give heed nor yield to his desires concerning the aforementioned matters, insofar as they are contrary to the will of God, but rather to oppose and purge himself of them*.

(1) He does so *out of love for the will of God*. Man will not forsake that which he loves except there be something superior which he loves more. A person who denies self loves God above all that exists—also far above himself. Since he loves God above all, he also loves God’s will above all—also above his own will. Since God loves holiness and hates sin, and since God commands the one thing and forbids the other, he also loves the one and hates the other.

(2) From this love proceeds that *he does not give heed to his lusts*.

He does not lend his ear to them, nor does he even consider whether he will conform to his desires.

(3) *He does not yield to them.* He does not do the will of the flesh nor of the mind. He is neither a servant of his desires and lusts, nor does he obey them.

(4) Rather, *he resists his lusts* when they surface, suppresses them, and promptly casts them out—as one, without hesitation, would shake off fire from his clothes.

(5) Yes, *he roots them out*, for he cannot endure that lusts continually arise in his evil heart. He is not satisfied with rejecting lusts as they arise, but does not even want them to arise. He therefore seeks for a purer motive. He purifies his heart by faith, strives for communion with God, and endeavors to fear and love God, so that his heart may attain to a holier disposition. Desires will arise out of such a heart which are more holy and less sinful, and thereby the regenerated man will have more power to deny the lusts of the flesh.

(6) Yes, *if the cause of Christ necessitates* it, he will be more ready and willing to *depart* from all that which he was permitted to have and enjoy without sinning in doing so—it being the will of God that he surrender all for Him and His cause. In this manner the person who denies self will know whether having possessions is contrary to or agrees with the will of God.

The Objective of Self-Denial: The Glory of God and the Welfare of Our Neighbor

The objective of self-denial is *to glorify God and to promote the welfare of our neighbor.*

(1) The objective is not to eradicate all desires—and thus to be without fear for evil and a desire for that which is good. To do this would be to dehumanize man and to render him incapable of serving God according to His will and being of benefit to his neighbor.

(2) The objective is also not to receive honor from man, nor to be esteemed as a saint; for that would be the ultimate in hypocrisy.

(3) The objective is also not to merit thereby something before God. Such is the practice of some within blind popery, who, due to their erroneous objective, use erroneous means. They deprive themselves of lawful foods, walk about in a hairy garment, do not sleep upon a bed, scourge themselves, and perform similar examples of will-worship, which are “not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Col 2:23).

(4) It is also not the objective to base one’s salvation upon this self-denial. That would be a pagan activity.

Rather, the objective in self-denial is,

(1) *the glorification of God* as being holy, worthy of obedience, and the only lawgiver. This is true for themselves, and also to others they reveal that God is to be acknowledged as such, and ought to be obeyed. And if the cause of Christ necessitates it, then with the denial of all that is dear to us (which apart from such circumstances would be lawful to desire and enjoy), one has the objective to glorify God in that He is both sovereign as well as that He may require again all that He has given. We thus indicate that He is so precious that we would let go of that which is most precious for His sake.

(2) In self-denial one's objective will also be to *be beneficial to one's neighbor*; that is, to adorn godliness so that the ungodly may be convicted and converted, and the godly be aroused to deny their *sinful self* also, and willingly to forsake everything *for the cause of Christ*.

The Converted and Unconverted Distinguished

We have thus presented to you the nature and the attending circumstances of self-denial; this can serve as a mirror for you. The unconverted may thus perceive his failure to deny self, and his living for and cleaving to the world and his own lusts. A converted person may thereby also detect his faults, the extent to which the old man is still present within him, and in what measure he still cleaves to his *sinful self*. In order to make this even more clear to you, we shall place a person who does not deny self in contrast with a person who does deny self.

A person who does not deny self:

(1) Is a slave of his lusts, makes that which is of the world his portion, and insists that his lusts be satisfied at any cost. He clings as tenaciously to worldly things as a bat bites into bacon—even though it has been nailed to a piece of wood. It is either a desire for money, honor, entertainment, immorality, or food and drink which ignites his lusts, and he must have it even if it is contrary to his judgment, and even if he is tired of sinning.

(2) Entertains great thoughts about himself. The one is beautiful and attractive in his own eyes, the other is wise, the *third* is of noble descent, the *fourth* is rich, and the other is a scholar. And thus everyone has something which he imagines himself to be—even if in reality this is not true. He will puff himself up concerning this as a balloon filled with air.

(3) Has a proud disposition of the heart engendering a desire to be honored and perceived as such. He is worthy of this, and it is his due. Even though he is conscious himself that he is not what he imagined himself to be, he nevertheless wishes to be honored, served, revered, and loved.

(4) Has himself in mind when he is or intends to be in the presence of people—not to take care of that which is honest in everyone's view, but to be honored by men. This is his objective when he dresses himself. His choice of color and fashion; his decision to join or abstain from certain company; the manner in which he carries himself; and his speaking or being silent are all governed by a seeking of self. If his ego did not stir him up, he would be lazier than a donkey, grimmer than a hog, more careless than a beggar, more foolish than a fish, and more talkative than a fool. However, his ego is the wind in his sails that renders him active.

(5) Takes careful notice of what everyone says of him. If he is praised—even if it is in his presence—he is wonderfully delighted. With delight he allows this to transpire and as a result thinks a bit more of himself.

(6) Will immediately be displeased at heart if, in his estimation, he is not loved, served, and revered according to his wishes; or if this is manifested more to others than to him, displeasure will immediately arise in his heart and he will abhor such a person. He hates them and will no longer have fellowship with such persons. His anger is aroused and he avenges himself as much as he can—be it with words or with deeds.

(7) Is envious of others if they receive more love and honor, and do more business than he does. Even if the other person is more worthy of this, he nevertheless imagines by himself that he deserves it as much as others. And even if he is personally convinced of his own unworthiness, he not only wishes to be treated equally, but wants to be honored and esteemed above the other. Those who are elevated above him, as well as those who elevate such a person above him, are his enemies.

(8) Becomes sorrowful and despondent if others do not fulfill his desires. His work stagnates, he functions at a slower pace, and he may even go in the very opposite direction of his previous course. The wind is no longer in his sails, for he can neither attain love nor honor. Thus, a person who does not deny self shows that he is not satisfied unless everything ends in him. In his activity he has himself in view, ends in self, and also wants others to behave in this fashion toward him.

(9) Will be a zealous Christian in the realm of religion, as long as he can gain love, honor, and profit—yes, he even wants to be counted among the most orthodox. If, however, that does not materialize and the very opposite occurs, his religion is also finished. Before losing esteem, position, or possessions, he would rather let go of Christ and His cause. Once having denied Him, he

will then become the greatest persecutor in order to make his apostasy all the more honorable. Such is the person who does not deny himself.

Over against this we shall present a person who practices a great measure of self-denial—as is generally true for a godly person—so that everyone may perceive how it ought to be, may be enamored with that condition, and endeavor to increase in it.

(1) A person who denies self desires no *honor of men*. He does not wish to do anything that would render him dishonest and despicable, for that would be sin and to the detriment of godliness. If he receives honor and love, he acknowledges himself to be unworthy thereof and becomes smaller in himself. He does not want people to end in him, but is desirous that God be glorified through Him. He thus lets all things pass him by or, through him, allowing them to end in God. However, he neither desires nor strives for honor in himself. Yes, even if honor did not belong to anyone and were, so to speak, lying upon the street, he would not pick it up out of a love for honor itself. He perceives that if any one should receive it, he would not be the one, since he is acquainted with his abominableness. Since he does not desire to have it, he can thus accept it if another person receives it—and that from all sides. He is not envious, for he neither desires it, nor is worthy of it—yes, he does not want people to end in him. This would be burdensome and grievous to him. Honor is therefore not his objective in all his activity. He is neither grieved nor becomes fretful if he is not honored for his accomplishments. He does everything out of God, through God, and unto God. It is sufficient to him to serve the Lord—he has surrendered his honor to the Lord Jesus, and it thus no longer belongs to him.

(2) The person who denies self does not desire *love*. To be loved is even more deeply ingrained in us than to be honored. The person who does not deny self wants to have the heart of the other person, but the person who denies self neither desires nor seeks this. He judges himself aright and knows himself to be hateful, defiled, and abominable. He perceives that all that he does is so maimed and deformed, that it would rather stir up repulsion instead of a being pleased. He would therefore demand something unreasonable if he were to desire that others would love him. He finds delight in loving others, and this he pursues with his entire heart. He rejoices in the fact that others are loving and exercise the virtue of love—even if it is toward him (although he considers himself the wrong object). If he is loved, he uses it as a suitable opportunity to be of benefit to those who love him. However, he

neither seeks nor has in view the love of others unto himself. He does not find delight in the fact that he is loved for the sake of who he is. He is also neither grieved nor becomes ill-tempered when he is not loved. He is not envious when another person receives more love than he, for he is not worthy of love. And, if anything of Jesus' image is to be perceived in him which is truly delightful, he desires that this be delighted in. This is not of himself, however, and he therefore does not want the expression of love to end in him. He neither wants to be attached to another person in an inordinate manner nor does he wish to be someone else's idol. He jealously guards against receiving from others who are attached to him anything which would be God's worthy due and thus cause the Lord to be loved less. With such a heart he loves his God—a heart which is divorced from the creature. This suffices him and he stands amazed that he is loved of God.

(3) The person who denies self also does not desire *to be revered*. A person who does not deny self also wants to be revered, since he imagines himself to be worthy of honor and love. He imagines himself to be in possession of awe-inspiring traits. He imagines that his riches, circumstances, and position—all of which render the other person of lesser importance than he is—make him awe-inspiring; he is the man and she is the woman who inspires awe. When he is seen and speaks, others ought to tremble and shake for his wrath. Poor worm! A person who denies self, on the other hand, does not consider himself to be in possession of awe-inspiring traits but of despicable traits. Therefore, he does not wish to be revered. External riches and prestige he knows to be but as a garment cast about his shoulders, which do not change him personally. He therefore considers it great foolishness if anyone were to revere him for this external garment. If he has been placed over others in government or within the home, he will uphold this position and insist that others acknowledge, respect, and revere him in this capacity—not in view of his person, but because of God's command. He is thus humble in his elevated position, wants to be revered, and yet at the same time, not be revered.

(4) A person who denies self also does not wish *to be served*. A person who does not deny self is of the opinion that he has a right to everything and that everyone must be ready at his bidding. Those who are subordinate to him will never be able to satisfy him; he becomes angry if there is the least deficiency in their obedience. A person who denies self, however, always desires to be of service and of help to others—that is his delight. It is more a burden to him than a delight when others run around, sweat, labor to serve

him, and are ready to obey at his bidding; for he does not consider himself worthy of being served. If he requires service of someone who is subordinate to him, he does not do so for his own sake, but because the Lord has established that order. When others serve him, he is quickly satisfied and graciously overlooks faults. He tenderly cares for his servants, seeing to it that they neither become too fatigued nor toil too much in his service. He is even compassionate toward his cattle.

(5) The person who denies self also does not desire *riches*. He has chosen God to be his portion, thereby renouncing all earthly possessions. He entrusts the care of his body to God. He knows that he is not worthy of one bite of bread in his mouth nor of any sackcloth to cover his skin. He also considers the goods of this world as being too insignificant and unstable as to concern himself with them. He is satisfied with such food and clothing as are necessary. He lives out of the hand of God and is therefore neither envious of the possessions of others nor of the great profit they earn. It does not matter to him if others boast of their possessions and tower above him; the lowest place suits him best. He is not discouraged if he has little and loses possessions—for they were not his portion. It suffices him to diligently use the means to earn his living. If he fares well, he does not cleave to it, but becomes humble by it, as the patriarch Jacob. He does not squander it, but is all the more generous to the poor. And if the cause of Christ necessitates this, he willingly renounces everything and can joyfully witness being deprived of his belongings. In such a manner the person who denies self lives in this world—in union with God and divorced from everything else.

The Need for Self-Examination

Behold, this is the mirror; examine yourself in it. An unconverted person will be able to perceive that he is entirely void of self-denial and still lives according to his own lusts, is a servant of sin, in all things seeks himself, and wishes all things to end in him. You who do not deny self—consider in what condition you are! First, it is a clear evidence that you are as yet unregenerate and cannot thus enter heaven (John 3:5). *Secondly*, you are not a partaker of Christ and His merits (Luke 14:26). *Thirdly*, you are a worldly-minded person and your portion is only in this world (Ps 17:14). *Fourthly*, in this life you will experience nothing but sorrow as you either seek, find, or miss the things of this world, and after this life there will be eternal destruction. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13).

The godly can also perceive hereby how much or how little of such self-denial they have. How much their heart still yearns for honor, love, respect, service, and the possessions of this world! Here their ulterior motives originate which at times pollute their very best works, cause them much grief, and rob them of all joy in their work. This is the cause of discouragement and lack of freedom, estrangement from each other, wrathfulness, quarrelling, and a boasting and speaking of one's own performance—be it more openly or in a more subtle and concealed manner. Oh, you who are godly, examine yourself closely. Seek to ascertain what it is that your heart still cleaves to and consider the abominableness of being self-focused and of such seeking of self. Consider that it is the dead fly which causes the precious ointment to stink. Consider that it is an abomination to God and that it irritates others, for it will readily be perceived by both the converted and unconverted alike. Consider that, to a large extent, you render yourself unprofitable to make gain with your talent and to be of benefit to others. Therefore, abhor yourself, resist it, and strive against it. For if you have not denied self now in time of peace, how will you then fare in time of persecution?

Exhortation to Self-Denial

It is thus necessary that we courageously resist our sinful self and endeavor to arrive at a disposition and propensity of inward self-denial, as well as the manifestation of self-denial in all circumstances which occur. Take the following to heart:

First, consider your own state. Who are you that you would pride yourself in anything and seek anything for yourself? God answers you, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). Bildad the Shuhite answers, “How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm” (Job 25:6). Job replies that we are “a leaf driven to and fro” and “dry stubble” (Job 13:25). And if that were yet too lofty, David answers: “Man is like to vanity” (Ps 144:4). Even that is yet too lofty and therefore he says, “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity” (Ps 62:9). Such is true for you. Are you then worthy of honor, love, and esteem? Do you now dare to pursue something in order to cause it to end in you?

Secondly, what is it that you desire and cleave to? It is also as insignificant and vain as you yourself are. Are you any better off if a dead dog—which every man is—renders you honor, love, and friendship rather than if a piece of peat or wood were to bow to you? Are you any better off than if you were to gather a heap of shells or

shards as children do, and if this were to render you attractive in your own eyes? Be ashamed that you would turn your heart and eyes to that which is nothing at all. Why would you pollute your soul with the pursuit of such trifles and thus displease both God and man by pleasing yourself? Therefore, divorce yourself from this.

Thirdly, believers, has not the Lord granted and laid away better things for you? The Lord has granted you that steadfast and durable benefit, consisting in the enjoyment of God, communion with Christ, the experience of peace and joy, and eternal glory. He has granted you this in principle, and He will cause you to possess it in perfection. God says therefore: "This I have given you and I shall as yet add such and such to it. Now, it is My will that you only keep that in view, only seek that, and only delight yourself in that. It is My will that you would look away from all that is of the world. Neither focus upon, nor seek it, but be divorced from it, and deny self in regard to these things. If I give you a measure of them, it is only that you would use them for your growth in grace and to glorify Me." Therefore, if the cause of the Lord necessitates it, be content with eternal things and renounce that earthly filth.

Fourthly, it is a righteous thing to deny self as far as the things of the world are concerned, for all honor, reverence, service, and possessions are the Lord's; you are not entitled to them. Shall a man rob God? Give unto God that which is God's. It is unrighteousness if you desire to be esteemed and to be something, considering that you are nothing; to desire to be loved, considering you are hateful; and to be revered, considering you are nothing but a slave of the lowest order. It is an unrighteous thing to consider yourself to be something and hypocritically appear to be what you are not—wishing others to acknowledge you to be what you are not or to be of a more elevated position than you are. Recognize this sin therefore, hate it, and flee from it.

Fifthly, self-denial engenders great peace. All your restlessness is the result of a seeking of yourself. For then your conscience convicts you of sin, you do not get your desire, someone else is in your way, people oppose you in words and in deeds, and you receive the opposite of what you are striving for. Something is always wrong and everywhere there are thorns to prick you. There is much you must care for and preserve, and there is nothing but restlessness and sorrow. However, there is much peace in a heart where self is denied—which is content with Jesus. Such a heart is elevated above the earth and is beyond the reach of the world and all that is to be found in it. One then dwells in the secret place of the Most High and abides in the shadow of the Almighty. Therefore,

cast self away as being a troublesome burden. Speak as follows: “Away sin, away pride, and away self-love; I have been plagued by you long enough. I no longer know you, I no longer desire you, and I wish to live in peace with my God, perform my task with freedom, and run my course with joy.”

Sixthly, a person who denies self has freedom, for he has nothing to lose. He fears neither shame, hatred, nor damage to his possessions, for he has renounced all this—and whatever the Lord has loaned to him he will readily return to Him if He requires this. Therefore he says what needs to be said, and he is silent when the Lord commands him to be silent. He lets his light shine in spite of all those who hate this and for this reason would wish to cause him grief. He is under no obligation, and is loose and free from everything. In such a manner a person who denies self manifests himself. His path is as a shining light; he proceeds and sheds forth light until it is full noon; he proceeds from strength to strength. He remains steadfast in his course and increases in strength. Therefore, undertake this task and proceed in it with the courage of a man.

Seventhly, continually hold before you the example of the Lord Jesus and His saints. The Lord Jesus has denied Himself for your sake. Would you then not renounce self for His sake? He who was rich became poor; He who was in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant. The Lord of glory was ridiculed and despised, and He who is love was hated. He who is worthy of being served by all, came to serve. The Prince of Life was crucified for you, and would there then be anything too precious to you to relinquish for His Name’s sake? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob left their homeland and everything else. The prophets renounced everything in order to be faithful to the Lord. The apostles left everything and followed Jesus. The godly martyrs witnessed the spoiling of their goods joyfully, and willingly they surrendered their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Do therefore likewise and no longer seek yourself.

Eighthly, even though all that we possess is not ours, and all that pertains to the body is not worthy of attention, God wants to reward abundantly for whatever one has renounced and relinquished upon His command out of loving obedience toward Him, and for His Name or cause. If we renounce our honor, He will give grace and glory (Ps 84:12). If we deny ourselves love, the Lord will love us (John 16:27). If we deny possessions, the Lord will be our abundant gold and our plentitude of silver. Since the Lord will not permit a service to be unrewarded, He will also not permit all that we relinquish out of love for Him and for His Name to be unrequited. Observe this in the following passages: “He that loseth

his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt 10:39); “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt 19:29); “But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30). Much true profit can be gleaned from casting away that which is sinful, from ridding ourselves of that which hinders us, from returning that which was loaned, and then receiving in return such great and glorious matters. That truly ought to stimulate us to deny self. If God is willing to promise this, we ought to be made lively by the promises.

Final Advice for Those Who Desire to Deny Self

If you are desirous to be in such a holy condition and have such liberty, and to be weaned from all and whatever the Lord wants us to be weaned from, then:

(1) Make a firm resolution—not only in a general sense, but also pertaining to whatever you are most attached, hinders you most, and most pollutes your walk.

(2) Do not imagine, however, that all has been accomplished if you have lively desires for that condition and activity, and now fully want to commit yourself to this, for *your own “P”* is strong. It was the *first* to reside in you and it does not readily want to depart. It is not so easy to deny self. Therefore, be aware of the strength of the old man and the weakness of the new man, and call upon the Lord for help and strength.

(3) Be on your guard in all that you do as far as your conduct is concerned, lest your *self* be mingled with it. You will soon perceive this if you but take notice, and it will bring much strife upon you.

(4) Be encouraged, however, for self must be removed, and you will increase greatly if you are but determined to do so. It will steadily become easier.

(5) Take note of the *first* stirrings, and smother your *own self* when it initially surfaces.

(6) And if you cannot root this out so easily, do not cease with this labor, but practice the virtue as well as you can, and you will experience that you will improve.

 CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Patience

Contentment and self-denial engender patience, which in Greek is υ(πιμουη& (*hupomone*). It is a compound consisting of υ(πο_ (*hupo*)—which occasionally means *through*, sometimes *under*, and sometimes *over*—and με/νω (*meno*), which means to remain. The combination yields υ(πομε/νω (*hupomeno*; that is, to remain, to remain steadfast, to persevere), and also υ(πομονη& (*hupomone*) patience. It means as much as: to overcome suffering, to remain the same during suffering, to move beyond suffering, and to remain steadfast. In our language it is a derivative of *patient*, which in turn is a derivative of the Latin verb *pati*, to suffer. *Patience* is thus the ability to endure suffering.

Patience is the believer's spiritual strength which he has in God whereby he, in the performance of his duty, willingly, with composure, joyfully, and steadfastly endures all the vicissitudes of life, having a hope that the outcome will be well.

Patience is *to be strong in God*. Spiritual valor or strength which we discussed in chapter 62 consists of the following: 1) a trusting in God's help, whereby one courageously undertakes his duty; 2) steadfastness, whereby one continues and perseveres in his duty; 3) patience, whereby one repels all that comes against this duty, so that it is no impediment. Patience is thus a type of strength or valor. Valor is a courageous disposition whereby the believer perceives the vicissitudes of life as being capable of hindering him. He not only understands the necessity of conquering them, but also of bringing glory to his Lord. As a champion he thus overcomes these circumstances. The patient person derives such strength *from God*. Spiritual life is feeble, the body is tender and readily suffers if not well, the flesh is evil and would readily

succumb under discomfoting events. However, the patient person takes hold of the strength of the Lord, and in this strength proceeds. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee” (Ps 84:5); “Through God we shall do valiantly” (Ps 60:12). The exercise of patience is a task of great magnitude. It is valiant to endure affliction well, to take hold of God’s strength, and to be engaged by reason of this strength. It brings matters to a glorious end.

The subject—that is, the seat of this virtue—is the soul of the believer. The unconverted are entirely incapable of being patient. They do indeed also endure affliction—yes, they encounter severe trials. Some who are motivated either by glory, or by the unavoidability of the circumstances can endure them manfully, doing so without any display of fear, anxiety, or pain. They cannot be patient, however, since they do not have a divine duty in view, desiring to uphold this duty and to perform it well. They do not derive their help from God through Christ, and they have no hope that the outcome will be well, for there are no promises for them. Therefore even though they steel themselves in their affliction, they are not patient. However, patience is the ornament of a Christian. A believer views himself as being reconciled with God, and considers all affliction to come to him from God in order to promote his welfare. He has promises that the outcome will be glorious and therefore only believers exercise patience. “Here is the patience of the saints” (Rev 14:12). In order to demonstrate that no one can be patient except he be a believer, faith and patience are frequently conjoined (cf. Titus 2:2; 2 Tim 3:10; 2 Thess 1:4). Patience most particularly resides in the soul. This virtue neither consists in a boasting with the mouth, nor in a restraint of one’s gestures, but is of an internal nature which in turn manifests itself externally. It is through the custom, not so much of suffering, but of continually exercising herself to possess this virtue, that the soul will acquire a patient disposition and propensity; the soul will then be patient. “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). An impatient person does not have control over his heart; it is of no use to him. However, a patient person has his heart under control and makes use of it as such, permitting no inordinate thoughts and motions to be entertained in the heart relative to affliction.

The object of patience is all the vicissitudes of life, that is, all manner of affliction. The tribulations, both bodily and spiritual, of the righteous are many—those that come upon them without human intervention, as well as those that come their way by means of men—be it during a peaceful time for the church or during time of persecution for the Word’s sake. Some tribulations are light, some

are more severe, others are dreadful, and there can even be a cruel death. They are all grievous to man and are capable of both assaulting faith and tossing it to and fro—and if it were possible, to drive out hope, love, and other virtues, as well as their manifestations. Patience opposes this, doing so not to be delivered from affliction (for that would be in vain), but in order to endure it. The patient believer will not allow himself to be deterred from his virtuous intentions and their manifestations. He will neither permit himself to exercise these virtues in a lesser degree of holiness nor with less boldness. Thus, the soul perseveres in her affliction and continues to endure her affliction; yes, she prevails that much more strenuously and derives strength from her weakness. In view of this, patience is called “the enduring of the same sufferings” (2 Cor 1:6). This is neither to suggest that one finds delight in affliction, nor that a person may and must not pray for deliverance; rather, he must suffer in subjection to the will of God.

The Essence or Nature of Patience

The essence or nature of patience consists in the enduring of affliction willingly, with composure, joyfully, and steadfastly.

(1) *We endure* affliction if we take the cross upon ourselves as being laid upon us by the Lord (Matt 16:24), follow Jesus with that cross, and perform our duty as between God and the soul only, as well as toward our neighbor. With that cross one proceeds—even if it were from Jerusalem to Golgotha—in order to die. Irrespective of whether it is a wooden, iron, or leaden cross, believers do not wish to exchange it. They desire to have it, for it suits them best, and they thus carry it to heaven.

(2) It is a *willing* enduring of affliction. Affliction is certainly contrary to natural desire and it can oppress the soul and body to such an extent that tears will burst forth from our eyes. Nevertheless, such endurance is not forced; it is not of a compulsory nature. Rather, patience embraces this and is willing because the Lord wills it. The Lord’s will is the soul’s will—irrespective of whether this is Mt. Tabor or Golgotha. God’s will is God’s will, and this renders everything welcome and delightful. “... the spirit indeed is willing” (Matt 26:41); “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it” (John 18:11).

(3) It is exercised with *composure or a quietness of spirit*. Patience precludes murmuring, discouragement—and if our affliction is inflicted by men, it also precludes wrath and vengeance. It does not trouble the soul as a storm would do to a sea, but the soul permits the waves and billows to go over her. Such a soul is as a smooth beach upon

which the waves, so to speak, playfully run dead; or she is as a rock which remains immovable and breaks up the sea as it bears down upon it. David endured all manner of affliction in this manner. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God” (Ps 62:1). The church is exhorted to conduct herself as such. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because He hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust” (Lam 3:27-29).

(4) Yes, not only does the patient soul maintain composure, but she even *rejoices* in affliction, be it that she already enjoys the blessed fruit of this, receives many comforts from the Lord, or suffers for the sake of godliness and for the name of the Lord. This was the wish expressed by the apostle toward the Colossians; namely, that they would be “strengthened with all might ... unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11). Concerning the Thessalonians he says: You have “received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess 1:6), and concerning himself he says: “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2 Cor 7:4).

(5) The patient person endures affliction *with steadfastness*. One can have much courage prior to affliction being inflicted, and courageously accept it. If, however, we experience the reality of affliction, and it seems to last quite long, one would desire to cast away this troublesome burden and avoid it—even if would have to sin in doing so. And if we cannot rid ourselves of it, everything is turned upside down within and without, and impatience with all its consequences gets the upper hand. However, patience does not impose limits upon the Lord as to what the measure ought to be, or how long it ought to last. The patient believer is satisfied with the goodness and wisdom of the Lord. He proposes to himself that it may be all his life, for so precious is salvation to him. If deliverance comes earlier than that, he rejoices, and if not, it is also well. He thus endures in patience until his affliction comes to an end. “But let patience have her perfect work” (James 1:4). This is neither to suggest that patience itself is perfect in the godly, nor that it renders something perfect. Rather, one designates something perfect (or complete¹⁷) to which the finishing touches have been applied, even though someone else could have performed this task in a far more excellent manner. In like manner, patience adds the finishing touches to our affliction; that is, it lasts as long as the affliction lasts and will not separate itself

¹⁷ The Dutch word “volmaakt” can be rendered both as “perfect” and “complete” in English.

from affliction prior to that. Such is the exhortation to the congregation of Smyrna: “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev 2:10).

(6) Patience endures affliction with *a hope of a good outcome*. In this instance the proverb is true: *Hope is the comfort of affliction*. Patience cannot exist without hope. When there is no longer hope, patience will no longer be exercised. There is no patience in hell due to the absence of hope. Hope supports patience. “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:25). We err when we define our hope in a good outcome too narrowly, that is, within a certain time frame and by reason of such circumstances. This frequently miscarries, since the Lord’s ways are not our ways. The patient person therefore holds to the promises of God in an unrestricted sense; namely, that the Lord will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it (1 Cor 10:13); that affliction will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb 12:11); that it will be to our advantage in order that we may become partakers of His holiness (Heb 12:10); that the crown of life will be awarded in consequence of this (Rev 2:10); and that upon much affliction a greater measure of glory ensues (Rev 7:14). The patient person hopes upon these promises and anticipates their fulfillment. Jesus is his example in this, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). The apostle therefore calls patience the “patience¹⁸ of hope” (1 Thess 1:3).

The cause of patience is not to be found in man himself. A natural man may clench his teeth, control himself, remain silent, suppress all emotions, and, control himself by way of reason—all this in order to reap the glory of being steadfast. However, he will not be able to make himself patient. Also a godly person will not be able to bring this about in his own strength. The Lord must work it in him and He is therefore called “the God of patience” (Rom 15:5). The Lord grants the godly faith and gives them a lively view that He inflicts this affliction upon them with His fatherly hand. He secretly sustains them by strengthening the inner man. In their affliction He comforts them much according to the soul and permits them to taste His grace. He causes them to perceive the lightness, advantage, and transitory nature of affliction. He shows them how advantageous and glorious the outcome

¹⁸ The word “patience” in this text is rendered as “endurance” in the Statenvertaling. There is thus an obvious verbal relationship in the Statenvertaling between Heb 12:2 and 1 Thess 1:3.

will be. This causes them to be quiet and encouraged. They are then willing to suffer, and tribulation will then work patience, and that experience and hope which maketh not ashamed.

The purpose and result of patience is that believers may execute their duty well. The patient person does not end in his affliction, his suitable disposition, in enduring his affliction well, and in the manifestation of a patient disposition. He has something much higher in view. He possesses his soul in patience in order not to be hindered in his performance, but rather to be more capable of carrying out his task. He does so by his own personal godly exercises, by letting his light shine forth, by manifesting a godly walk among men, by being an example to others, by leading others to Christ, and by boldly confessing Him. That is his objective, and that he seeks. He perceives that affliction would hinder him in this if he were not to behave himself well. He furthermore perceives that in behaving well, his affliction will be to his advantage in pursuing his objective. He therefore strives for patience. Consequently, taking up the cross and following Christ are conjoined: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt 16:24). This is also true for patience and running the race: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). Patience and other virtues are likewise conjoined: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess 3:5); “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Pet 1:5-7).

The Conviction of the Unconverted

This truth as presented to you is sufficient to convince the unconverted that they are void of this virtue. Whether they are entirely insensitive, or have a gentle disposition, or are able to endure a sickness well, or do so either by bearing up under it by way of reason while perceiving that they cannot be relieved from affliction anyhow and thus exercise patience, or in order to get glory from steeling themselves and being strong—all of this does not constitute patience. From that which has been said they will be able to perceive that their patience is not spiritual strength in God, as being their God in Christ, and that their patience does not issue forth from faith in Christ nor from their union with Him. They will perceive that they do not endure affliction willingly, with composure, joyfully, steadfastly, as having a hope for a good outcome, to

make them holier, and to lead them to felicity. The reason for this is that they have no basis for appropriating a single promise to themselves. They will perceive that they do not desire patience in order to be more fit to exercise all manner of virtues. Even if some have the appearance of being patient, they are, nevertheless, generally irritable and fretful. They become more wicked and ungodly, and their wrath is expressed toward God Himself; they are as ungodly Israel in the wilderness. At one time they had no bread, then no meat, and then again no water—and they would therefore immediately murmur, depart from God, insist on returning to Egypt, and even blaspheme God. When God chastises such, they will revolt more and more (Isa 1:5). If God does not help, they say, “Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer” (2 Kings 6:33). They wish to be delivered from their affliction at any cost: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebol*; that is, *If God does not want to help me, I shall ask for the help of the devil*. Thus, they proceed from wickedness to wickedness until they have brought themselves into hell where patience does not exist.

The Impatience of the Godly

Having had the nature of patience presented to them, the godly will be able to observe on the one hand that they possess this virtue in principle; however, they will also observe on the other hand how much impatience is still to be found within them. When a spiritual cross comes upon them, when it becomes dark, when God hides His countenance and withholds His comforting influences, when He appears to neither hear their prayers nor immediately to grant the desires of their soul, then they are at once discouraged, unbelieving, and irritable. When they are surrounded by all manner of bodily afflictions, and their afflictions are of long duration and of an excessive nature, then where is their patience?

Then, with Jonah, they are peevish (Jon 4:8), and are as discouraged as Israel was, saying, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me” (Isa 49:14). They immediately despair and think, “There is no hope” (Jer 2:25); “My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord” (Lam 3:18). If their affliction lasts long and is excessive, their faith falters and they think that all this comes upon them in wrath. Thus, they complain, “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies” (Ps 77:7-9).

They stumble in regard to God’s providence (Prov 30:9) and

accuse the Lord of hardness, saying, “Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me” (Job 30:21). Then they will question whether the Lord’s dealings are right, would demand an account of Him as to why He deals thus with them, and *contend with the Almighty* (Job 40:2). At times despair surfaces, so that the soul chooses strangling and death above life (Job 7:15). “Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand, and cut me off! What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life” (Job 6:8-9, 11).

Seeing the prosperity of the wicked, resentment arises in the heart, and they say, “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning” (Ps 73:12-14). When they observe that many of the godly prosper in the world, they are envious and think, “Why do I not fare as they do?” If their cross is inflicted upon them by man, they become angry, vengefulness surfaces, and, as a dog, they bite the stone being cast at them.

At times God’s children, to their shame and grief, become conscious of such turbulence; and, they rightfully ought to be ashamed and grieved, for:

(1) While being impatient, many sins merge together. An impatient person is a breeding ground for all manner of corruptions which grievously pollute the soul. There is unbelief toward God’s promises, lovelessness and stubbornness toward God’s will, pride (as if they were superior), envy and vengefulness toward their neighbor, and a holding in esteem the things of this world.

(2) They render themselves unfit to serve the Lord and to edify their neighbor. They offend those that are weak, and cause the world to mock with godliness.

(3) They bring heavier judgments upon themselves, for the Lord will prevail when He executes judgment. They are the cause that their affliction is of longer duration, is more severe, and does not yield the benefit it otherwise would.

(4) They themselves remain restless and anxious due to seeing their sins continually, and not being able to shake off the cross. “Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered” (Job 9:4). Therefore refrain from impatience, and rather “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet 5:6); “Despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction” (Prov 3:11).

Believers Exhorted to Be Patient

Believers, possess therefore your souls in patience. Give heed to the following motives in order that you may be stirred up to that end.

First, it is your desire to obey the Lord, is it not? How frequently have you not offered yourself to the Lord, saying, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” The Lord, however, commands you to be patient, and therefore listen to this exhortation as coming from the very mouth of the Lord. The Lord Jesus says to you, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19); and the apostle says, “(Be) ... patient in tribulation” (Rom 12:12); “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1); “But let patience have her perfect work” (James 1:4).

Secondly, it is a matter of absolute necessity, and you cannot do without it. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). There is no other way to heaven except by way of tribulations. You can neither avoid nor sidestep them. On the other hand, there is much work to be done by you in order to promote your sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord. How will you persevere (for you wish to persevere and you will persevere until you are in heaven) except by way of patience? This causes us to accept affliction, not to hinder us in our way, but that it render us fit for the performance of our duty. Therefore strive for this as being absolutely necessary. Exercise yourself in this until you develop a habitual disposition in this respect.

Thirdly, consider where your affliction originates. It does not originate with yourself, for you love yourself too much for this. It does not originate with men, for they cannot so much as move without the will of God, nor pull one of your hairs out. Rather, it is the Lord Himself who sends this upon you—the sovereign Lord whose hand none can stay and to whom no one can say, “What doest Thou?” It is your reconciled Father in Christ who sends this upon you in His wisdom, goodness, and love, doing so to your advantage. “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb 12:9). Would you then render opposition to the Lord? This is indeed neither your desire nor are you able to do so. “Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live” (Heb 12:9). Say rather, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord” (Mic 7:9); “I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Ps 39:9). That will be well-pleasing to the Lord.

Fourthly, when considering affliction itself, its nature is not such that you should sin relative to it by way of impatience.

(1) Affliction is *light*; the fear of it is ten times greater than the affliction itself. This is unanimously confessed by all who have experienced it, and you will have to admit this as well. Paul calls his great tribulations—to which ours cannot be compared—“light afflictions” (2 Cor 4:17). The reason for their severity is due to your failure to submit yourself to it, for if the apostle judges them to be light, then how do you dare to call them severe? Do not bodily afflictions pertain to the body only? Should you then be so concerned about your body which is but dust and will become dust—and which will also be glorified? Therefore do not act as if a piece of straw is that heavy.

(2) Your affliction is but *for a short season*; it readily passes by. What is past is past, what is future is not yet upon you, and you do not know what will or will not come. You only have the present. And even that will pass momentarily. Even if the same affliction would last your entire life, it would also not be long, for your life itself is short, it being nothing more than vapor. Such is therefore also true for all affliction in this world. Paul calls it “our light affliction, which is but for a moment” (2 Cor 4:17). Peter says: “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness” (1 Pet 1:6). Should you then be impatient concerning affliction which so readily passes by?

(3) The *extent* of this affliction has been determined. It will last that long—not any shorter or longer. It will be that severe, and this severity will be neither more nor less than the Lord has ordained. The Lord restricted the devil as to the measure in which he could touch Job; he could not add one ounce to it (Job 1-2). Job acknowledged this: “For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). Irrespective of whether you are fretful, discouraged, and desirous to escape it and cast it off, it will remain with you to the end. Is it then not better to take it upon you patiently and to endure it?

Fifthly, affliction is very beneficial; it is medicine for the soul.

(1) It humbles the soul in light of committed sins. “I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him ... till they acknowledge their offence” (Hos 5:14-15). It causes the soul to be as a weaned child. “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child” (Ps 131:2). It causes the soul to take pleasure in submitting to the Lord’s chastisement. “... if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity” (Lev 26:41); “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God” (1 Pet 5:6). It causes the soul to be ashamed.

“Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised. ... Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed” (Jer 31:18-19). It causes the soul to withdraw itself and to be weaned from all things. “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Ps 102:7).

(2) It will cause us to cautiously guard against sin and to strive for holiness. “I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul” (Isa 38:15). This is God’s objective: “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:10). This was David’s experience, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (Ps 119:71). The prophet bears witness to this: “For when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa 26:16). Affliction causes the graces in the soul to be lively and active. It is then that prayer-life revives. “Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them” (Isa 26:16). *Necessity teaches us how to pray*. He who is not able to pray ought to become either a sailor or a married man. Faith will then be revived. When Abraham endured a trial of the greatest magnitude, he believed “against hope ... in hope” (Rom 4:18). David says concerning himself, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps 27:13). Then hope is strengthened. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance” (Ps 42:5). Then love is revived. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:7). The moon and the stars are seen best when the sun is absent. It is such with love. In bearing the cross the godly perceive that missing the Lord is what weighs them down the most, and when the Lord is near, that their affliction is no affliction. Then they have enough and would rather enjoy communion with God with the cross, than to be estranged from Him without the cross. Believers, since all these matters are indeed your delight and are the desires of your heart, why then would you not also desire the way by which you obtain these matters? And if you desire the way of affliction for its benefits, it behooves you patiently to take this affliction upon you and to endure it as being a wholesome—although bitter—medicine.

Sixthly, patience is a precious ornament and a profitable disposition for a believer. A patient soul is a soul which is childlike, willing, quiet, meek, self-denying, believes, hopes, and loves God. Therefore the patient person is precious and pleasant in God’s

sight and a suitable object for God's mercies. God also does not leave Himself without witness to such by manifesting His mercy, love, support, comfort, and help for their deliverance. "...God, that comforteth those that are cast down" (2 Cor 7:6); "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor 1:4); "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet 3:4).

Patience renders the cross lighter, so that one can bear it with ease. One will possess his soul, so that inordinate desires are held in check—and the intellect and will shall be under his control in order to utilize them in harmony with God's will. In this manner they will reap all the benefits from affliction which we have enumerated above, for affliction as such does not engender these benefits, but they are brought forth through patience in affliction. The Lord is then glorified by us, our neighbors become convinced of the power of godliness, and the godly will thereby be strengthened in their afflictions, being encouraged to bear them also with patience. Then the present affliction and chastisement will have their appropriate effect, and "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb 12:11). One will then rejoice when the Lord has removed the cross and will thank the Lord for this. "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Ps 119:75); "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isa 12:1).

Seventhly, hold before yourself the examples of the Lord Jesus and the saints so that you may be stirred up to imitate them in their patience. The Lord Jesus, being such a glorious example for us in our entire walk, is also exemplary in patience. "... yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa 53:7); "... but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet 2:20-21).

Add to this the example of all other saints who have gone before you. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10-11).

Since all those who are now bearers of the crown have been bearers of the cross, you must emulate them in the bearing of the cross in order that, with them, you may inherit the crown of life.

(1) Be sensitive concerning your cross and be on guard against hardness.

(2) Cease from having esteem for all that is to be found in this perishing world. Consider the brevity of time which as yet is left you for affliction.

(3) Consider that the way to heaven is the way of affliction, and that we cannot walk upon this way except by way of patience.

(4) Be continually engaged in exercising faith in the promises and have hope therein that all will certainly come to pass.

(5) Persevere in reading the Word, which has been written for us to teach us patience and to comfort us (Rom 15:4).

(6) Continually pray for patience (Rom 15:5). If with such patience you may exercise yourself in all things—also in the least,—you will increase while you are thus engaged. “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess 3:5).

 CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

Uprightness

Uprightness is denoted by several different words in the Hebrew language, each of which renders its meaning from a different perspective. There is $\rho\#\psi$ (*yashar*), which means: *to be right, to make right, to govern, to make smooth*. From this perspective uprightiness is as an even and smooth pathway which is straight and without bends, guiding the pedestrian in a straightforward manner to his goal. This agrees with the meaning of our English word: right—rightness, to be upon the right way, to proceed in the right manner. There is $M\tau$ (*tom*), which is a derivative of $M\mu\tau$ (*tamam*). This means: *to complete, to fulfill, to perfect*. Thus, uprightiness renders everything perfect and applies the finishing touches to every virtue; without it everything is imperfect and invalid. There is also $\eta\kappa\nu$ (*nakoach*), which is a derivative of $\eta\kappa\nu$ (*nokach*). This means: *for, against, over*. Uprightiness thus pursues the proposed objective, holds it in view, and does not deviate from this—neither to the right nor to the left. Then there is $\eta\mu$ (*emeth*). When the Hebrews speak uprightly, they say, “It is $\eta\mu\beta$ (*beemeth=in truth*),” that is, *amen*, truth; it is all harmonious. In Greek we have $\tau\omicron\ \gamma\nu\eta\&\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ (*to gnesion*). This means *to be born lawfully*, since only that is born and proceeds lawfully from man which is the result of upright conduct. There is $\alpha\phi\theta\alpha\rho\sigma\iota\alpha$ (*aptharsia*), which actually means *incorruptibility*, and is thus indicative of uprightiness, of the purity of something, of not having the principle of corruption in it, and of that which always remains immutably the same. Then there is $\epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\kappa\rho\iota\upsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (*eilikrineia*), which describes *that which can be distinguished by the light of the sun*, for uprightiness can endure the light and may be observed in sunlight. “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light,

that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

Uprightness is a Christian virtue which God, by means of the Word, has planted in the heart of believers, whereby they do the will of God in truth.

We designate uprightiness to be a *virtue*. It is not a specific virtue which is only applicable in certain situations. Rather, it is a universal virtue which encompasses all virtues. Thus, whatever man does is not a virtue unless it is accompanied by uprightiness and he, so to speak, is imbued with it. Perfection pertains to the possession of all virtue. Wherever there is a deficiency, there is no perfection. Uprightiness pertains to the manner in which virtues are exercised, however, and thus there can be uprightiness even if that which is performed is deficient.

Uprightiness is a *Christian virtue*. In some unconverted persons there is a natural uprightiness; not all their actions are hypocritical. As they deal with and walk among the people, there are many things—also as far as their religion is concerned—which they do with their heart. They miss the matter itself, however, and what they do is only of an external nature. They miss the disposition of heart, and their heart is neither spiritual nor regenerate. They do not have in view the spiritual objective which they ought to have. Therefore, in spiritual things they also lack uprightiness, and it is thus nothing but a natural work. If the Lord Jesus commands them to do something in which they find no delight, then with the rich young ruler they depart sorrowfully (Matt 19:16-22). Christian uprightiness is of an entirely different nature, however; it has different objects, proceeds from a different heart, has a different objective, and differs in manner. It proceeds from union with Christ and there is thus conformity with Christ. It is therefore referred to as *Christian uprightiness*.

The subject of this virtue is the heart of the believer. Prior to regeneration, God’s children are as all other men: blind, evil, impotent, unwilling, and dead in sins and trespasses. However, the Lord grants them His Spirit, who illuminates, regenerates, and quickens them by uniting them to Christ, so that Christ lives in them and they in Christ. Therefore in all circumstances they do everything out of an entirely different principle and in an entirely different manner. The seat of uprightiness is neither to be found in the countenance, the clothing, the mouth, nor in their actions, but in their *heart*. Their intellect is illuminated by a wondrous light, their will embraces the spiritual matters which are revealed to them by that light, and their passions go out after those matters in order to have them in possession and to perform them in a manner pleasing

to the Lord. They thus have an internal propensity which shines forth in their countenance, clothing, words, and deeds.

Believers are the *upright*. “The upright love Thee” (Song 1:4); “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright” (Ps 37:37). They are upright in heart: “...God, which saveth the upright in heart” (Ps 7:10); “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Ps 97:11). They are upright in their ways and walk: “Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way” (Prov 13:6); “Blessed are the undefiled in the way” (Ps 119:1).

The object of uprightness is the *will of God*. God has revealed to His church in the law what He enjoins and what He forbids. The upright person embraces this will willingly and joyfully as being the will of God—without any exception as far as matter, manner, time, or place are concerned. Such is the manner in which the upright person deals with the law. His intellect is engaged in keeping this rule in view, the will loves it, and the affections go out after it. The singular objective of the upright person is to do the will of God and in this will he ends without any ulterior motives. “Let my heart be sound¹⁹ in Thy statutes” (Ps 119:80); “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect²⁰ way” (Ps 101:2).

The Pattern of Uprightness: Truthfulness

The pattern of uprightness consists in doing all things *in truth*. Pilate once asked, “What is truth?” but he did not wait for an answer. You, however, hear what truth is. First, *God is truth* (Deut 32:4). He is nothing but truth, essence, life, eternity, holiness, and glory. God is the origin of all that truth which is external to Him. His work is truth and His words are truth. *Secondly*, the Lord Jesus is *the truth* (John 14:6), for He is the antitype and the embodiment of the types and shadows. *Thirdly*, the word of God is *truth* (John 17:17), and it is the object and rule that must be believed and performed. *Fourthly*, there is also truth which is to be found within man. “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Ps 51:6). It is the latter which we shall discuss here. To this belongs truth as it relates to our mind, heart, mouth, works, and objectives.

(1) There is *truthfulness which pertains to the intellect*. Thus, the intellect, being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, perceives and understands the divinely revealed matters—which pertain to the way of salvation through Christ—in such a manner as is consistent

¹⁹ The Statenvertaling reads: “Laat mijn hart oprecht zijn tot uwe inzettingen,” that is, “Let my heart be upright towards thy statutes.”

²⁰ Again, the Statenvertaling speaks of “den oprechten weg,” that is, “an upright way.”

with their very essence. There is harmony between their perception and the matters themselves. "... the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1). This is to have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). "If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21); "The truth of Christ is in me" (2 Cor 11:10).

(2) There is a *truthfulness of the heart*, which is the acquiescence of the will with those divine truths to be believed and performed. The heart is united with this will so that with desire and love it believes and does this will. Thus, that which is truth in the Word of God is also truth within them. "O how love I Thy law!" (Ps 119:97); "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7:22).

(3) There is a *verbal truthfulness*, which is the harmony of words with the heart—the heart which, as has just been stated, is now illuminated and exercises love. This transpires when we speak of divine matters, confess the truth, and in our fellowship with people, express the matter as it is and as it is to be found in the heart. "My mouth shall speak truth" (Prov 8:7); "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not" (1 Tim 2:7); "Speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Eph 4:25).

(4) There is a *truthfulness of performance* when our countenance and conversation—regardless of whether this pertains to the spiritual or civil realm—agree with the heart which knows and loves the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps 119:97); "But be ye doers of the word" (James 1:22); "I will direct their work in truth" (Isa 61:8); "I found of thy children walking in truth" (2 John 4). There is a *truthfulness of objective* when our objective is in harmony with the will of God, as well as our heart, mouth, and deeds. In being upright it is particularly required that the goal we have in view be in harmony with all that we say—or else it is all corrupt. An evil objective corrupts good means and evil means corrupt a good objective. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps 66:18); "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matt 6:22-23). Now consider all this collectively; it all must harmonize. When all this harmonizes, there is truthfulness; and this truthfulness constitutes the true essence of uprightness. Where such truthfulness is lacking in some measure, uprightness will not be functioning.

God: The Origin of Uprightness

God is the cause of uprightness, for God grants light to know

the truth, gives love for the truth, and gives truth in the heart. Thus, this is also true for uprightness in all actions which issue forth out of the heart which is spiritually alive. “I will direct their work in truth” (Isa 61:8). David recognized that this has to proceed from the Lord and he therefore prayed for it. “Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes” (Ps 119:80). Although God touches and reforms the heart directly, He nevertheless uses the Word as the means. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

The nature of this virtue having been presented, everyone is obligated to exercise it. God required this from Abraham and all who are His children by faith. “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1); “Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God” (Deut 18:13); “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt 10:16). Your heart will inwardly be convinced of the justness of this requirement and the obligation to it. As you turn to yourself, however, and hold before you the above mentioned truth as a mirror, what manner of person are you? Do you belong to the upright? It is necessary to bring those who are not upright under conviction by showing them their wretched state; may it be a means unto their conversion. It is also necessary to convince the upright of their deficiency in this respect.

Hypocrisy: The Sin of the Unconverted

First, you truly still belong to the hypocrites if you are yet in an unconverted state. How can your heart be upright before God if you do not know Him in the face of Jesus Christ? How will you walk in the way of uprightness if the right way unto salvation is still hidden for you; if you have neither an inward desire nor love to enter upon the way to God through Christ and to tread upon the way of holiness; and if you have not even placed your foot upon that way, but yet have your darkened understanding, your stony heart, and your life in this world? All within you is corrupt and is entirely contrary to God and His will, and thus, there can be no uprightness. Even if your objective and some of your deeds—be they civil or of an externally religious nature—are in harmony with your heart, there is nevertheless no uprightness, for the heart itself is not right and therefore all that is in harmony with it is not right. Even if you are not a hypocrite, you are, nevertheless, not upright before God.

Secondly, you are an avowed hypocrite if you seek yourself in all that you do—and if in all things you are striving for honor, love, and gain, and to that end conduct yourself differently from what

you are. You rarely examine yourself and are so accustomed to being two-faced that it does not even occur to you when you do this. We shall therefore now depict your life and show you what you really are in your social and religious walk.

(1) As far as his social walk is concerned, it is as if the hypocrite had been educated by *Cain*. He speaks friendly to his neighbor and draws him out, doing so, however, to kill him. From *Saul* he has learned the trick to engage others, to praise someone in order to catch him in the net, or to shower him with many favors: "I shall give my daughter to David in order that she may be a snare to him." He has copied from *Joab* how one can express joy to someone, inquire about his well-being, and then thrust a murderous weapon into his heart. *Absalom* teaches him how to arrange for a meal in order to kill Amnon. *Judas* has instructed him how he can betray someone with kisses. David describes such as follows: "... the wicked ... speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts" (Ps 28:3); "They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly" (Ps 62:4); "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps 55:21).

(2) As far as religion is concerned, the church will be filled with hypocrites during a season when godliness is in esteem. How desirable it would be if the hypocrite would stay away from the pulpit, and that one would not find such there who study with all their might! The one does this to acquire the reputation of being a scholar, although this is in reality not the case. If he has a conscience which points out his wrong motive, he will pacify it by insisting that after having acquired a reputation he will be better able to edify. The other pursues this in order to be esteemed as being eloquent, and the *third* to arouse adoration for the fact that he has a voice and gifts which are such that they bring men into ecstasy and press tears from their eyes. A *fourth*, while praying, appears to be drawn into heaven, and preaches as an angel. However, all this is but to gain the honor, esteem, and acclamation of the people. Upon coming from the pulpit, such men will inquire in what measure they have delighted the people. It is a balm upon their soul if many people have been in attendance, the congregation has been moved emotionally, and people say, "This is a remarkable minister." They prefer to be in that company where they are praised and people make an idol of them. The devil can change himself into an angel of light, and thus also his servants can indeed put on the hairy mantle of Elijah and the robe of John the Baptist in order to lie (Zech 13:4). However, the one is able to put on this

garment better than others. There is no more abominable and loathsome thing under the sun than a minister who is a hypocrite.

We shall now turn to the *members*. The hypocrite observes how the godly conduct themselves, and he imitates this in order also to be esteemed as a godly person. Evil is thus not to be found in the external manifestation—as if all who conduct themselves as such are hypocrites, for then the hypocrite would avoid all that. For he does not seek to be known as a hypocrite, but as a godly person. Thus, those who slander the godly refute themselves when they call the godly hypocrites, for it is evident to everyone's conscience that one ought to be godly and live as the godly do. When hypocrites seek to imitate this—and precisely because the hypocrite seeks to appear to be such a one—then, for the one who possesses the essence of that appearance, it is godly indeed.

However, the vice of the hypocrite is to be found in his heart and objective: He does not endeavor to be what he wishes to appear to be. He neither is nor strives to be as such, but only has the name in view. Once he has the name, he is satisfied and will know how to use this name to his advantage. In order to get this name, he will diligently frequent the church. Irrespective of what the circumstances may be, he must be present and one must not miss him there. He goes to hear the minister whom the godly delight to hear most, and then will specifically find a seat where he can be seen by all. When there is singing to be done he will also take a book in his hand—even if he should not read one letter in it. He will also lift up his voice, doing so not to stir up himself and others to praise God, but that others would hear what a beautiful voice he has, or else how well he knows the tune. He will therefore start before the lead-singer and will, at the end, give the final sound. In prayer he will bow himself with much ado, or else will stand up. During prayer he will manage to heave sighs and after prayer will wipe his eyes as if he had cried. During the sermon he gives the impression of being very attentive and will occasionally arise. He will not take his eye from the minister, and it appears as if he draws the words out of his mouth and, so to speak, eats them. Occasionally he will open his Bible and will fold one of the pages as if he were marking a given text—even if it is far removed from the text which the minister mentions. In the meantime he secretly glances sideways to see if it is being observed that he is so attentive, even though there is nothing he thinks less about than the sermon. He may perhaps be counting the panes in the windows, the pipes in the organ, or observing the engravings on the pulpit. When the deacon comes to gather alms, he pretends not to notice until the

deacon is near, pretending to be disturbed by him in his attention. If he gives a coin, he selects the thinnest one so that it will sound as if it were a piece of silver. If he gives a bit more, he would wish that it would resound throughout the entire church. After the worship service, our hypocrite departs and visits this one and that one with his Bible in hand in order to show that he has come from church. He will speak very highly of the sermon and relate that it has been so edifying for him, even though he cannot say a word about it and complains about his poor memory.

When hypocrites offer a prayer or read a chapter, it must be done so loudly that others would be able to hear it—even if they were on the street. If they expect the minister for family visitation, the Bible especially must be open and sometimes two or three books will be added to this. They will be reading so attentively that they do not notice the minister—even when he has entered the room, and will then act startled. They make acquaintance with the godly and speak to others about the familiar relationship which they have with other godly persons. Occasionally they will hold their heads a certain way, be very particular in the manner in which they measure the words of the godly (as if they gave careful heed to their words), and they even imitate some of the bad habits which some of the godly have unconsciously acquired. Yes, to stand out even more, they will make the carrying about of an insignificant thing a matter of conscience. They are very zealous about external things and conduct themselves with an air of superiority in rebuking others. Their mouths are always filled with complaints about the corruption and decay of the church. They presume to instruct ministers as to how and what they ought to preach, and have something to say about every minister and every sermon—particularly about those whom the godly hear the least.

Hypocrites conduct themselves as beggars do: The one pretends to be thus and the other as such a person, each one understanding his art of beggary best. Likewise, the one hypocrite functions best in this respect and the other in that respect. The one is so rude in his hypocrisy that everyone can detect it, and the other can be so sophisticated that he would deceive the very best among the godly. Some have learned the art so well that they deceive themselves, and for failure of giving heed to their heart, imagine that they are sincere. If it were possible, they would even deceive God Himself. Be ashamed, hypocrites! With great aversion I have occupied myself with discovering you to yourself in order, if it were possible, to bring you to repentance.

To that end consider:

(1) What an abominable monster you are in yourself, for you are not even human in the true sense of the word! Everything about you is convoluted, abominable, and evil. Are you not afraid of yourself as you resemble a devil more than a man?

(2) How abominable and hateful you are to honest people—in a godly as well as a civil sense! Do not imagine that you will remain unknown. For a while you may be able to create the impression that you are upright in both a social and religious sense, but it will not last long before people will detect you, and then you will be the most despised man that is alive. Even if you remained undetected, what more do you have but a handful of flies?

(3) God, with whom you have to do, does know you. He is thoroughly acquainted with you and takes note of your wicked objectives and of all your hypocritical subterfuge. How abominable you then must be in the eyes of God! Hear what David says of this: “Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man” (Ps 5:6).

(4) Job asks, “For what is the hope of the hypocrite ... when God taketh away his soul” (Job 27:8). Read the answer: “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish” (Job 8:13); “Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites” (Isa 33:14). In Matt 23 Jesus pronounces *woe* upon hypocrites eight times. A hypocrite will not be saved, but in hell will be under the most unbearable circumstances, for when the ungodly are threatened with hell, it is said that they will be with the hypocrites. “And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 24:51).

Impress this upon your heart—you who are not upright and you hypocrites—and repent before it will be too late. “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded” (James 4:8).

True Believers: Upright in Principle

True believers are principally upright, for:

- (1) They have spiritual light and life, are partakers of the divine nature, and Jesus has been formed within them.
- (2) They perceive their wrongdoings, are grieved over them, confess them, by faith seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ, and do battle against them.
- (3) They are concerned about this, since they mistrust their hearts and become conscious of their corrupt impulses. They bring their heart before the Lord and pray, “Search me, O God, and know my

heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps 139:23-24).

(4) This is true in a general and universal sense of the word as far as matters, time, and place are concerned; they make no exception whatsoever. Regardless of whether they fall more into the one sin than the other, it is nevertheless contrary to their intent and the wishes of their heart; it grieves them. Yes, in secret they are much more upright than they are in the presence of men, and their heart is even more upright in principle than it is in its manifestation. They can and dare say to the Lord: “With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Ps 119:10, 128).

All these matters are true evidences of uprightness. With this, believers may support and comfort themselves when they, due to detecting so much deficiency within themselves, are concerned as to whether or not they are upright. Nevertheless, they must humble themselves over their deficiencies and transgressions. To that end we wish to hold before them their faults.

(1) Reflect upon what we have said about hypocrites and thus examine yourself as to whether you have not made yourself guilty in one respect or another.

(2) Consider whether an intention suddenly surfaces which battles against the conscience and prevails. Or you may seek to pacify your conscience with spurious arguments that there is something good in it. Nevertheless, the objective is not pure, but is intertwined with a seeking of self, so that there is a discrepancy as far as the heart, countenance, words, or deeds are concerned.

(3) Carefully give heed as to whether your corrupt nature is continually engaged in suggesting ulterior motives, for example that there is not a lively and strong endeavor to have the proper objective in view; that the corruption is not sufficiently mortified and subdued; that we are careless and do not give heed to our heart; that there are circumstances in which we make room for the temptations of the devil, not earnestly battling and praying against them. Corruptions thus gain strength to stir up self-seeking motives. Sometimes when the devil tempts us to seek self, these temptations will have no effect and will be shaken off without harm being done. Sometimes he will accuse us—be it deceitfully—that with a given task we have self in view and thus prevent the performance of that which is good and so trouble the person. A believer, not being acquainted with his vices, is of the opinion that

he truly seeks self in this endeavor and is thereby troubled and accused in nearly all things. He continually says, “This is the reason why I am doing it,” and in a different situation says, “I am doing it for such and such a reason.” If, however, a believer is acquainted with such assaults, he will not be disturbed by this, but will proceed with the performance of his task—even if he does so as a man who proceeds on his way during a hailstorm. However, corrupt nature and ulterior motives will frequently surface.

(4) It is also contrary to being upright if we do a task partially. This is not to suggest that those deficiencies which are to be detected in the very best works render a man as not being upright. Such is the case, however, if our heart is not in our work and if we do it listlessly and in a lukewarm and sluggish manner, the task is performed but not with the whole mind, will, and strength, and with every effort to have a holy objective. Our own intellect, will, activity, and seeking of self will intermingle, so that the task is performed but in a half-hearted manner. Consider if you also do not perceive yourself as being guilty of this. If so, then know that:

- even though you are pleasing in Christ as far as your person is concerned, the Lord is nevertheless displeased with your lack of uprightness.
- your lack of uprightness will soon be detected by others—particularly by the godly. It will grieve them if they are strong Christians and it will arouse aversion and antipathy against you if they are little in grace.
- it will render godliness suspect to those who are of the world, and for your sake there will be a widespread slandering of the godly. They will say all the more, “See, such people are they; they are a group of hypocrites.”
- you yourself will have a troubled conscience and will lack freedom in all things.

Therefore humble yourself greatly before the Lord, be grieved over it, and let the view of the wickedness of your heart and deeds cause you to loathe yourself, and may you thus be fearful of the sin of not being upright. May it cause you to battle against it all the more earnestly and to strive for uprightness.

The Necessity of Being Exhorted to Be Upright

Be determined to be upright and to conduct yourself as such, for uprightness is, in the *first* place, an absolutely essential characteristic of the Christian, for a Christian is indeed upright. “... the upright love Thee” (Song 1:4). Of Job we read: “That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed

evil” (Job 1:1); of David: “I was also upright before Him” (Ps 18:23); of Hezekiah: “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” (Isa 38:3); and of Noah: “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations” (Gen 6:9). Uprightness is also an inseparable attribute of all virtues. Uprightness is a requisite in prayer: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24); of faith: “Now the end of the commandment is charity ... of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim 1:5); of love: “Let love be without dissimulation” (Rom 12:9); of the entire disposition of the heart: “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless” (1 Thess 5:23); and of our entire conversation: “Therefore let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). Since uprightiness is thus such an essential and inseparable characteristic of the Christian as well as of his work, what shall we then undertake unless we do so with uprightiness?

Secondly, uprightiness is desirable and befitting for a Christian, for the God with whom we have to do is pure light, is the only searcher of the hearts whom we cannot deceive, who perceives the least deviation, desires truth in the inward parts, whose eyes are upon the truth (Jer 5:3), and who delights in those who are upright in their way (Prov 11:20). Does having fellowship with such a God not require uprightiness? *The Lord Jesus* in whom we put our trust is perfectly upright and there is no guile in His mouth. *The Holy Ghost* who dwells in you as in a temple, is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), who leads His children in the truth (John 16:13). He would be grieved if you were to corrupt your ways and deviate toward unrighteousness. *The Word of God* by which you have been regenerated, which is your food and the rule of your life, is truth (John 17:17); it is the word of truth (Ps 119:43). Ought this not to motivate you to be truthful in all your dealings? *The spiritual life* which is in you, and the image of God which you bear, “is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). Pursue therefore the principle of uprightiness of spiritual life, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and in all uprightiness walk before the all-seeing eye of your God. See to it that your deeds are in harmony with your name.

Thirdly, uprightiness is a very precious ornament, and insincerity renders all virtues which someone may possibly possess despicable. However, uprightiness renders all other virtues glorious, adds luster to godliness, and causes the upright to be loved by natural men, by the godly, and by God Himself.

(1) They will be loved *by natural men*. As much as they may mock

with the godly, they have esteem for the upright. They say, “They are a group of hypocrites; however, so and so is genuine and is upright and with such a person I would wish to die” (even though it is mostly out of self-love in order not to be deceived). The words of the upright find entrance with them, and the upright are able to win others also without words. If uprightness were to shine forth in all the godly, what a luster godliness would have in the world!

(2) The uprightness of others is precious to *the godly*; they do not desire to have fellowship with two-faced people (Ps 26:4). Rather, their eyes are upon the faithful and upright ones (Ps 101:6). Even though someone has been regenerated in essence, but his uprightness nevertheless is penetrated with a seeking of self, the godly can have no fellowship with him. It is their desire to love them, walk sweetly with them, and take counsel with them; however, there is inner resistance. They cannot unite their heart with them; such cause them labor, toil, and sorrow. However, the heart is at once united with the upright, and the godly find delight in and are edified by their company. Lydia used uprightness as an argument with Paul by saying, “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there” (Acts 16:15).

(3) However, all this is superseded by the fact that *God Himself* finds pleasure in the upright. “Such as are upright in their way are His delight” (Prov 11:20). Just as we delight in observing those whom we love, so it is written of the Lord, “His countenance doth behold the upright” (Ps 11:7). The upright are harmless and do not wish to use evil means to help themselves. Rather, it is the Lord who “saveth the upright in heart” (Ps 7:10). God adopts the upright to be His intimate companions upon whom He bestows a special measure of His goodness. “Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Ps 15:1-2). The Lord causes the heart of the upright to be joyful. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Ps 97:11). If there is anything that ought to motivate you, this ought to be it. Be therefore upright, for the upright are loved by everyone, whereas hypocrites are hated.

Fourthly, God evaluates his children according to their uprightness. It pleases the Lord not to make His children perfect in this life. Everything is only in part here, and daily they still offend in many things. However, they are called the upright according to their inherent uprightness. By way of this uprightness all their weaknesses are, so to speak, covered in Christ. David had committed great sins, for at one time he misbehaved himself in this respect

and then again in a different respect. Nevertheless, due to his uprightness, it is written of him, “Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:14—for in that instance he had behaved himself hypocritically. Such is also true relative to the sins of Asa. “Nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect (upright) with the Lord all his days” (1 Kings 15:14). The conclusion of the rebuke addressed to Jehoshaphat was, “Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou ... hast prepared thine heart to seek God” (2 Chron 19:3). Hezekiah prayed, “The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary” (2 Chron 30:18-19). In Christ, God will overlook your defects if you walk before the countenance of the Lord with a truly upright heart. Therefore, be upright.

Fifthly, uprightness will give much liberty in the performance of our duty. Let the hypocrite fear the light, let the darkness be his refuge, let him be fearful of doing anything where opposition is to be expected, and let him be terrified and tremble due to each plague God sends into the world, but the upright man will be fearless, will have the courage to stand up for God’s cause, will manifest himself as a young lion, and will perform his duty. He will stand firm against all slander and danger, for he has freedom *within* and anticipates God’s help *without*. “God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go” (Job 27:5-6); “If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is ... that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him” (Job 31:33, 35-37). Uprightness will render a person to be that courageous. Even if he meets with violent opposition, he nevertheless does not fear, for the Lord helps the upright, according to this promise, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron 16:9). An upright person needs no other weapon but his uprightness.

Sixthly, uprightness yields a peaceful life and a dying in comfort. A hypocrite continually lives in unrest and fears that he will be found out. Much calculation is required to cover one hypocritical act with the other. An upright person, however, has a peaceful

conscience, and he is steadfast and sure of himself. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity ... we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor 1:12). And, if the hour of death arrives, and sins come to mind, it will be a comfort that our heart has nevertheless been upright before the Lord. “O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” (Isa 38:3).

The Means to Uprightness

Therefore, by way of continual exercise, be very zealous to acquire a propensity of uprightiness and to have such an entirely upright disposition—so that uprightiness will, so to speak, spontaneously issue forth, manifesting itself in all your deeds.

(1) Before the Lord acknowledge the corruption of your heart and that which issues forth out of this heart, and show at the same time the hatred and aversion you have for it, and your desire for uprightiness and truthfulness.

(2) Acknowledge your impotence, and that it is impossible for you to bring and maintain your heart in such an upright disposition. However, also acknowledge that the Lord has both the power and goodness to grant this to you. Therefore, come before the Lord with that desire and your destitute condition. Pray the Lord for this, doing so earnestly, humbly, and persistently, saying, “Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes; that I be not ashamed” (Ps 119:80). As you thus pray, look unto the Lord Jesus, who has merited spirit and life for you and has appropriated these merits to you. Come before the Lord with this, while holding before Him the promise He has made, namely, that He would cause our work to be in truth (Isa 61:8).

(3) Pay careful attention to your heart, which leans toward insincerity, and resist this insincerity at once. No matter how much shame or injury may come upon you, remain steadfast in your uprightiness.

(4) If you have done something insincere, reflect upon this for some time, so that it will deeply grieve you and make you more careful in the future.

(5) Remain continually in the presence of the Lord. The perception of the presence and omniscience of God is a powerful means unto uprightiness. These two are therefore conjoined: “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1).

(6) As you thus proceed, focus continually upon the Word of truth. Endeavor to understand its spiritual meaning, and the truth will make you free. You will increase in a walking in the truth; and one thus enters heaven. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way” (Ps 119:1).

 CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

Prayer

The acknowledgment of all God's perfections, and the exercise of all virtues toward God coalesce in prayer—that necessary, profitable, holy, and sanctifying duty of a Christian. Consequently, the exercise of religion is comprehensively expressed as praying and calling upon God: “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26).

Since prayer proceeds from a variety of motions of the soul, it is also referred to by various designations, such as *ηλ≡πτ* (*tefilla*), which means prayer (Ps 4:2); *ηνξτ* (*techinna*), which means supplication (Ps 6:10); *ξψ#* (*siach*), which means complaint (Ps 64:1); *ηθ(χ* (*tse'naqah*), which means calling or crying (Ps 9:13); *δε/ησιπ* (*deesis*), which means prayer (James 5:16) or supplication (1 Tim 2:1); *ι9κετηρι/α* (*hiketeria*), which means supplication (Heb 5:7); *ειντενχιπ* (*enteuksis*) (1 Tim 4:5), *εουξηη&* (*euche*) (James 5:16), and *προσευξη&* (*proseuche*) (Col 4:2), which all mean prayer; and *προσκυνει=ν* (*proskunein*), which means to worship (Matt 4:10).

In view of a variety of manners, times, matters, and respects relative to prayer, one may distinguish between various forms of prayer.

The Various Forms of Prayer in Scripture

First there is *worship*. This occurs when, while viewing and acknowledging the perfections of God, we reverently bow ourselves before the Lord and render Him honor and glory, and if—be it without words, with inward thoughts, or by way of external words—we “speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works” (Ps 145:5). This is also the work of angels toward Christ: “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb 1:6).

Secondly, there is *invocation*. This occurs when we request something from God, be it the deliverance from some oppressing or imminent evil, or the receipt of some benefit for body and soul. “And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee” (Ps 50:15); “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him...with long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Ps 91:15-16).

Thirdly, there is *supplication*. This occurs when, with much humility and by presenting many arguments, we persevere in prayer. “...Nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee” (Ps 31:22); “... he wept, and made supplication unto Him” (Hosea 12:4).

Fourthly, there is *groaning*. This occurs if we cannot find words to give expression to our desires or the lofty matters which we have in view and desire with great yearning. The apostle calls them, “groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26), and the psalmist says, “Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee” (Ps 38:9).

Fifthly, there are *public or communal prayers*. This occurs when the congregation calls upon God in either a public gathering place or in a private home, where someone audibly leads in prayer. “Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). Prayers which are offered when some gather to pray together are also considered communal prayers. “That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:19-20).

Sixthly, *there are private prayers*. This occurs when we bring our particular desires before God. There are:

(1) *Ejaculatory prayers*, which are sent heavenward to God during our work, while walking, or during a conversation with people. Thus, *Nehemiah* prayed to God while he was speaking to the king (Neh 2:4), and *Moses* did so while he stood before the Red Sea with Israel (Exod 14:13).

(2) *Seasonal prayers*, which in turn are either of an *occasional nature* when a particular incident prompts us to seek solitude in order to pray; or *regular prayers*, that is, at our designated devotional times in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Both ejaculatory as well as seasonal prayers are either:

[a] *Mental*, when bringing our desires before God by way of exerting ourselves mentally, and by way of reflection and contemplation. This occurs without words as is to be observed in the quoted examples of Moses and Nehemiah.

[b] Or *oral*, which occurs when we express our desires with words—even if we form and pronounce words without using the voice. Such was the case with Hannah. “Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam 1:13).

It can also be that we express our desires *with our voice*, doing so either more loudly or softly, depending on how far or how close we are to the people. “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord” (Ps 5:3). It is no wonder that the papists elevate mental prayers above oral prayers, since their oral prayers are nothing but recitations of form prayers, pater nosters, and *Ave-Marias*.

Seventhly, there is *intercessory prayer*. This occurs when we desire something from God for others. Such can occur for the *church in general*: “Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles” (Ps 25:22); “Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem” (Ps 51:18); “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps 122:6). This can also occur on behalf of *given individuals*. “Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him” (James 5:16); “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thess 5:25); “Pray one for another” (James 5:16); “Pray for them which despitefully use you” (Matt 5:44); “Prayers ... be made ... for kings, and for all that are in authority” (1 Tim 2:1-2).

Many abuse this practice in our days by repeatedly saying to each other upon parting, “I commend myself to your prayers; remember me in your prayers; I request your intercessory prayer; or pray for me.” They do this as commonly as the expression of a greeting. Apart from the fact that it is impossible to remember all those who make such a request, it is necessary that we know specifically what we are to pray for on behalf of someone else. The one who makes the request ought to be in specific circumstances, which should be revealed to those whose intercessory prayer he requests. Only then may one request intercession from another, and the one to whom the request has been made is obligated to do so, so that God, being beseeched by many, would also be thanked by many. However, the trend of making such requests is frequently no more than a custom, and it can cause one to lose sight of the intercession of the Lord Jesus.

There can be no intercession for the dead; they already are where they will eternally be and will remain; purgatory is indeed hell itself. There also can be no intercession for those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:16).

Eighthly, there is *imprecatory prayer*. Here we must be cautious and on guard that we are not carried away by our own passions, as

occurred with the disciples of Christ, who wanted to pray that fire consume the Samaritans who would not receive them (Luke 9:54). One may never pray for someone's eternal perdition, nor for the bodily destruction of someone who is our personal enemy. We may also not do so relative to those who offend God's congregation. If, however, the Lord moves us to pray against those who oppress and persecute the congregation in an extraordinary manner, we may then pray that God would convert them, and if such is not to be the case, that God would punish them so that they would no longer be able to oppress the church. It would thus be apparent that the Lord takes vengeance upon the blood of His church and furthermore that God would be glorified therein. "Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth" (Ps 83:16-18).

Ninthly, there is *thanksgiving*. Such occurs when we joyfully acknowledge the goodness of God manifested in all temporal and spiritual blessings bestowed hitherto, doing so especially for specific blessings. Such acknowledgment will motivate the supplicant to pray zealously for that which he presently desires. This is what Jacob did in Gen 32:9-12, as well as the church in Ps 75:2-5. Therefore thanksgiving and prayer are frequently conjoined: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil 4:6); "I exhort therefore, that, *first* of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim 2:1).

The Nature or Essence of Prayer

In our treatment of the subject of prayer we shall *first* show what its nature is, and then we shall stir you up to the exercise of prayer. In order to unfold the true essence of prayer we shall present 1) its definition (which we shall expound and enlarge upon); 2) its characteristics; 3) its external incidentals; and 4) the exercise of prayer, consisting in preparation, practice, and reflection.

Prayer is the expression of holy desires to God in the name of Christ, which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, proceed from a regenerated heart, along with the request for the fulfillment of these desires. Each word is of emphatic importance and needs to be further enlarged upon.

Prayer is *the expression of desires*. With this phrase we wish to give expression to what the soul's activity is in prayer. There is total involvement; that is, the intellect, will, passions, eyes, mouth, hands, knees, the entire soul, and the entire body are involved.

(1) The supplicant is focused *upon himself*. He knows, sees, and perceives *his deficiency*. He perishes from hunger and desires to be filled. He perceives *his impotence—his inability to help himself*. He also knows that no creature can give him this and he also does not desire to receive it from the creature. *God alone* can give this to him, but he sees and perceives with sorrow and anxiety of heart his *unworthiness, hatefulness and abominableness*. God can thus not be moved to help him by his disposition—indeed, this would sooner provoke Him to wrath. He perceives that he is not worthy—not even from afar—to address God, for his prayer is so sinful and so deficient that by it he cannot move God to hear and help him. He is so intensely focused on his disposition that he sinks away in misery and despair, and does not have a hope in anything within him or that proceeds from him.

(2) The supplicant is focused *upon God*, holding the Lord before Him as being majestic, omniscient, glorious, immanent, holy—as well as gracious in Christ, merciful, and omnipotent. Here he bows in humility and trembles due to the respect he has. Here he takes liberty to receive Christ and to make known his desires in and through Him, knowing that God is glorified in hearing and helping repentant sinners.

(3) The supplicant is focused upon *the matters* which he desires—be it deliverance from a cross which oppresses or threatens him, or a blessing for either soul or body. He perceives how necessary and beneficial it would be for him either to be delivered from this, or to receive a blessing. He knows what he desires, vividly reflects upon it, is enamored with it, and pants and yearns for it.

The supplicant intermingles these three matters. In one motion he focuses upon himself, God, and the matter at hand. Being in that disposition, he not only presents himself before God as such, but also gives expression to his desires before the Lord. *The expression* of desires is vividly presented in Scripture, conveying to us both the matter itself, as well as all who are or have been in such a disposition. Furthermore, Scripture stirs up inclinations toward such a disposition—yes, frequently causes a soul to be thus disposed. That which we denominate as an “expression,” Scripture refers to as:

(1) a pouring out: “... but I have poured out my soul before the Lord” (1 Sam 1:15); (2)²¹ “A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord” (Ps 102:1);

²¹ We have placed (1) and (2) under the same heading, “pouring out,” since the Dutch words “uitgieten” and “uitstorten” are both translated as “to pour out” in the KJV.

(3) a declaring: “I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me” (Ps 119:26);

(4) a lifting up: “Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Ps 25:1);

(5) a looking up: “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee (that is, arrange everything in as orderly a fashion as an army is organized in rows and divisions) and will look up” (Ps 5:3);

(6) a conversing: “When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (Ps 27:8);

(7) a crying, a panting: “They cried unto Thee, and were delivered” (Ps 22:5); “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God” (Ps 42:1).

(8) a seeking with all our heart and our whole desire: “They had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire” (2 Chron 15:15).

All these expressions are indicative of the intense involvement of the soul in prayer. When the soul intends to pray, she can frequently not find words—yes, all words are too inferior and inadequate to express the desire and the intense disposition of the soul. Therefore:

(1) She does so by simply manifesting that disposition to the Lord.

(2) Sometimes she does so by a sigh, which conveys more than she can express.

(3) When the soul is more enlarged, she begins to formulate words, doing so either strictly mentally, or quietly with the mouth—only moving the lips noiselessly, or with a soft whisper.

(4) As the desires increase in intensity, the voice also becomes louder, and if one is so far removed from people that one cannot be heard, there will be a calling out.

(5) And if the emotions become more abundant, there will be tears, especially if hope and love become stronger. What a wonder it is when a man who is not easily moved to tears and would be ashamed if he cried (this being inconsistent with his dignity), at times melts before the Lord in tears, which flow down his cheeks as rivers! The soul is never more in her element than when she has been soft and has been able to weep in a heartfelt manner. Job, that unemotional man, was able to cry: “I cry unto Thee” (Job 30:20). David, that valiant hero, who had the heart of a lion, wept before the Lord as a child: “All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears” (Ps 6:6); “Hold not Thy peace at my tears” (Ps 39:12). The brave and respected Paul generally prayed with tears: “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears” (Acts 20:19).

Prayer: The Expression of Holy Desires

We denominate prayer to be an expression of desires—not an expression of matters. An unconverted person who has a judgmental knowledge of spiritual matters, and who furthermore is eloquent, has an expressive voice, and has control over his emotions, can have a perception of the necessity and beauty of spiritual matters (although in a more natural manner and as if relating to natural matters) and present them in prayer in a very emotional and mournful manner. Yes, he can stir up his emotions to such an extent that he can speak tearfully about these matters. This is particularly true when he knows that he is being listened to or could be listened to; or, if he leads in prayer in a gathering where he can render himself pleasant by such expressions and tears, so that it appears that he is very spiritual, is very near to God, and is ignited with holy zeal—and yet it is no more than a natural work. I therefore refer to prayer as an expression of desires, and not of matters. Man is but an empty vessel who must obtain his fulfillment from elsewhere—from a source external to himself. To that end the Lord has given man the ability to desire and to give expression to his desires. The strength of his desires is proportionate to the measure in which he is sensitive of his deficiency, the magnitude and desirability of the matters which in his judgment could satisfy him, and the probability that they are to be obtained. He endeavors to express these desires accordingly. However, this does not necessarily render the desires holy, and we therefore do not merely refer to prayer as an expression of desires.

Instead, it is an expression of *holy* desires. We can indeed desire temporal matters in a spiritual sense, and spiritual matters in a carnal sense. Desires are carnal if they relate to sin, or if we desire good things with a sinful motive, in order to gain honor, love, favor, advantage, and pleasure. We desire temporal and spiritual matters in a spiritual sense if it is lawful to desire these things and we desire them in order to be able to better serve God joyfully and zealously—that is, if we desire those matters in the way we have prescribed earlier, and so that in them we may observe, acknowledge, and praise God’s grace, goodness, help, and power, finding a delight in doing so.

We call prayer an expression of holy desires *toward God*. We then look beyond all creatures—both good and evil—knowing that they are not able to help. Yes, even if they were able to help, we would nevertheless not wish to pray to them. Apart from God we do not wish to be helped, because we love God and do not wish to give His honor to another.

(1) It is idolatry to serve those who by nature are no gods (Gal 4:8).

(2) God wills that we call upon Him alone. “Call upon Me” (Ps 50:15); “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God” (Matt 4:10).

(3) Only such prayer has a promise associated with it. “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

(4) God alone has the required perfections of someone who is to be worshiped. He who prays aright desires to glorify God in prayer as the One who alone is *worthy of worship*; the only *fountain* of all good gifts; the *omniscient One* who knows the hearts and the mind of the Spirit; the *omnipotent One* for whom nothing is too wonderful; the One who is *good, merciful, gracious*, and the One who delights in mercy; the One who waits for someone to come to Him in order that He might be gracious to Him; and the One who is *true* and has promised to hear and to give. It is for this reason that the supplicant turns to the Lord, bows before Him in humility and reverence, displays his needs before Him, requests from Him the fulfillment of His desires, and thus waits upon the Lord. It is his delight and joy to worship God.

Prayer to Be Offered in the Name of Jesus Christ

Prayer must be offered *in the name of Jesus Christ*. “... and the Branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself” (Ps 80:15); “... for the Lord’s sake” (Dan 9:17); “If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14); “... that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you” (John 15:16).

(1) “In the name of” occasionally means *out of love for someone*. “And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me” (Matt 18:5). To pray thus in Christ’s name is as much as to say, “Lord, Thou dost love Thy Son, Thou art pleased with His sacrifice, and Thy Son loves me and I love Him. I now pray for the sake of the love which Thou hast for Thy Son that Thou wouldest hear me and grant my desire.”

(2) Occasionally “in the name of” means *upon the command of*: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 3:6). Then it means as much as to say: “Thy Son, who is my Surety with Thy approval, has sent me to Thee and enjoined me that I would call upon Thee and petition Thee for all that I stand in need of. This gives me boldness to humbly make this request.”

(3) Sometimes, yes, most frequently, it signifies: *for the sake of Christ Himself*; for the sake of His atoning suffering and death. “Through faith in His name hath made this man strong” (Acts 3:16); “... for there is none other name under heaven” (Acts 4:12);

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb 7:25). Since man, due to his sin, has made a separation between God and himself, he neither may nor is able to immediately come unto God. God would be a consuming fire to him and he would encounter what Nadab and Abihu experienced, who approached unto God with strange fire and were killed by God through fire. However, the Lord has given Jesus to be a Surety and Mediator who, by His suffering and death, has reconciled the sinner with God and has eliminated the separation. Upon His death, the veil was rent in the temple so that without any impediment one would be able to look into and enter the Holy of Holies. Believers thus have boldness to go unto God “by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:20). Christ is the way by which alone one may and can go to the Father (John 14:6). If we therefore pray in Christ’s name, that is as much as praying for the sake of the merits of Christ. The supplicant receives Christ who is offered to him and thus becomes a partaker of Christ and all His merits. With these merits he goes to God and displays them, and in this manner he petitions God for all that he desires.

Those who pray are not always in one and the same condition. *Some* are not able to assure themselves that they are partakers of Christ. Since they have strong desires for spiritual and temporal blessings, they take their refuge to God. However, they do so not directly, but with an eye upon Christ and His satisfaction, and they pray that God would be gracious to them for the sake of Christ and His merits and thus bless them. This constitutes praying in Christ’s name—although faith is weak. *Some* are principally assured of their portion in Christ; however, there is an estrangement from God. For such, upon engaging in prayer, it is therefore their *first* task to receive Christ and to reflect expressly upon His merits while consciously repenting. They thus show to the Father the merits of Christ and pray that their prayer for the fulfillment of their desires be heard on the basis of those merits. *Some* live a closer life and habitually are focused upon the covenant of grace, as well as the satisfaction and merits of Christ. Such, when engaging in prayer, are not always in need of an express transaction with Christ and a specific reflection upon His merits for the purpose of showing them to the Father, to say that they are coming and praying in Christ’s name and that they request the fulfillment of their desires for the sake of the merits of Christ. Rather, they approach and remain in the disposition of being partakers of the covenant, children, and partakers of Christ. They pray by way of

the covenant and the atonement of Christ, even though they do not mention it as such. However, we must take care not to be without an express transaction with and a returning unto Christ too long and too frequently, lest we lose sight of Christ and approach unto God in a more direct sense, thus dealing with God in a less humble and appropriate manner.

The Originator of True Prayer

A true prayer proceeds from the *Holy Spirit*. Man is spiritually dead by nature, and neither has a good disposition of heart, nor good desires. He is blind and ignorant of what can truly satisfy him. Nevertheless, he perceives bodily deficiencies and is fearful of evil. He also takes refuge to God when he is deprived of creature-help; however, neither the disposition of his heart, nor his prayer is pleasing to God. In order for anyone to pray aright, the Holy Spirit must grant the disposition, the desires, and the expressions. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zech 12:10); “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6); “The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26). This means that He grants the disposition and desires, gives the words in the mouth, goes before them, and causes them to pray after Him. In proportion to whether the Holy Spirit moves in a moderate or stronger manner, prayer will also be either more feeble or more zealous. Sometimes the supplicant is fervent at the beginning of his prayer, but then there gradually comes more darkness and he becomes increasingly dull. Sometimes he is in darkness and dull at the outset, but while he is wrestling he becomes more lively. Sometimes he is completely closed up within and He can neither produce a prayer, sigh, nor tears, and in such a condition He must arise and depart. Sometimes he is so filled that he does not know where all these desires, words, and tears originate, so that he is more in want of time than desire.

Question If we cannot pray aright without the Holy Spirit, why are we then commanded to pray for the Spirit?

Answer: Man has a natural intellect, he perceives his deficiency, and nature teaches him that he must pray. Under the administration of the means of grace he learns that the Holy Spirit is the author of prayer, and he learns from the Word of God that he must pray God for the Holy Spirit. By means of these natural convictions and motions the Holy Spirit works in the elect the inclination to pray and shows them that they neither have the right

prayerful disposition, the right desires, nor do they express them correctly. The Holy Spirit will show them that He must work all this in them and that therefore they must pray for the Holy Spirit. They are thus secretly wrought upon to pray for the Spirit, and are therefore already praying for the Spirit by the Spirit. Those who presently perceive in themselves the beginnings of the operation of the Spirit will pray that this might be increased by the Spirit.

Man, upon the Holy Spirit having wrought and stimulated a prayerful disposition in the soul, begins to express his desires *from a regenerated heart*. The regenerate man is thus the formal cause of his deeds. If even a natural man has an inclination toward prayer, this is much more so for a regenerate man due to the regenerate disposition of his heart. Since not all the regenerate know that such is the case with them, but perceive that they have a sinful heart; and since all manner of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds proceed from this sinful disposition, they become concerned as to whether they are permitted to pray—yes, at times they do not dare to pray, for it is as if they mock God. As they engage in prayer, it is always their intention not to sin, but they, nevertheless, always fall again into the same sin. The following passages come to their mind: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord” (Prov 15:8); “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov 28:9); “Now we know that God heareth not sinners” (John 9:31). For your instruction you ought to know:

(1) It is the duty of all the ungodly to repent and to pray. The abomination lies not in the fact that they pray, but in that, while praying for temporal matters, they do not repent, they willingly and consciously continue to sin; neither do they beseech God to be reconciled with Him, nor for a change of heart and deeds. They do so routinely, being accustomed from their youth to offer a prayer both morning and evening, which, if they were to neglect, would cause them to be restless. Or they do this hypocritically, being desirous, in spite of their worldly lifestyle, to be esteemed as good Christians.

(2) The prayer of those whose heart is upright before the Lord, who seek for reconciliation and the forgiveness of their sins, desire to be delivered from sin and to live in the love and fear of God according to His will, and pray for this while endeavoring to focus upon the Lord Jesus—their prayer will not be an abomination, but be pleasing to God. The Lord seeks after such supplicants, and He deals tenderly with such bruised reeds and smoking flax. Therefore let this give you liberty. Your repeated falling into sin is contrary to your intent, grieves you, and does not proceed from an

evil intent. Rather, it is the result of weakness, the flesh becoming stronger than the spirit.

Prayer Under Consciousness of Committed Sin

They who presently know that they have been translated from death to spiritual life, or may perceive the evidences within themselves from which they may conclude this (even if the assurance of this is not very strong), occasionally come into a condition which is more sinful than their common trend of life. They can also be taken captive by sin to such an extent that at the moment they cannot make a complete, joyful, and courageous resolution to presently arise from this sin and earnestly strive against it. Or it can be when the trend of their life is good, that they occasionally fall into a special sin. If under such conditions, they were to engage in prayer immediately—that is, without *first* coming to themselves, making a resolution to repent so that their heart convinces them that they are upright in their intention—it would be an irreverent undertaking and displeasing to God. Such persons would personally have no liberty in prayer, nor do so with holy attention, for their heart condemns them while they are thus engaged. Those who are in such a condition must *first* recover themselves, so that they may have an upright intention to battle against that sin, and betake themselves to prayer to beseech God for reconciliation and strength against this sin. They will then be at liberty because their heart does not condemn them (1 John 3:20-21).

It occasionally also happens that a regenerate person is entirely void of desires—not in essence, but in the exercise. When such a one engages in prayer he knows not what to pray, for he has no desire for anything. He has either lost sight of the desirability of the matters due to spiritual darkness, or he is discouraged due to not having received his desire after so much prayer. This will close his heart. What shall he do? Pray? He cannot. Shall he neglect prayer?—which such a person neglects all too often, and, due to such neglect, turns away from prayer entirely. That he cannot do, for his regenerated nature will not permit this and will continually incline him to pray. Such a person must not resist such feeble inclinations, which is so easily done; rather, he must be as a small child. Or, as one who revives from a fainting spell moves about very feebly and speaks very softly, he must follow his feeble inclinations, present them before the Lord, persevere in prayer, and acquaint himself with the Lord—or else he will backslide even further. However, in doing so he will experience that “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Ps 102:17).

The Purpose of Prayer

The purpose for which one presents his holy desires is the fulfillment of those desires, *beseeking that they be granted*. The supplicant makes a request. When someone makes a request to another, he will support that request with arguments; such is also the case here. The supplicant will not merely say: “Lord, save me, and create a new heart within me; say to my soul ‘I am thy salvation’; teach and guide me,” but the supplicant will enlarge his request by way of argumentation. This is to be observed in Christ, David, and other saints, for this renders the supplicant:

(1) More humble, for as he perseveres, he will behold God and himself all the more clearly. He will think: “How do I dare to speak so boldly—I, who am so sinful, so abominable, and so unworthy!” He sinks away, so to speak, and acknowledges that it is nothing but incomprehensible grace that he may speak with God and that God would hear him.

(2) More active and his prayer more fervent, for he perceives the necessity and desirability of the matters all the better. His desires are quickened, and his heart is enlarged and begins to flow forth as a river.

(3) More holy in his prayer, for his objective will be more genuine, he is more aware of this genuine objective. The more genuine his objective becomes in desiring a matter, the more liberty he will have in desiring it.

(4) More fit to persevere in prayer, since he then views the matter from all angles. The one desire will then engender another and those desires in turn will engender others. Such perseverance causes him to dwell longer in the presence of God; the soul comes into and remains in a more holy disposition, and has already received a blessing.

The presentation of such arguments must not occur artificially, but as they spontaneously issue forth from the prayerful heart and as the Lord causes matters to come to our attention. We shall then strive for the glorification of God, whose glory, goodness, and power would manifest itself in the hearing of prayer and in granting the matter itself. At one time we shall use as an argument that, if the Lord were to grant us our desire, our abilities would be such that the congregation would be edified and it would be to the benefit of others. Then again we shall focus upon the promises of God, being exercised with them until we believe the immutable truth of God in a more lively manner and we can be more assured that this matter will also become our portion—God having promised the hearing of prayer. At another time the godly will present

themselves to the Lord as being His children, knowing that God, being pleased when His children hunger and thirst after Him, will consequently give them something and gladden them—just as a father according to the flesh is compassionate toward his hungry and desirous children, and rejoices in giving them their desires and making them happy. Then again they will present with urgency the merits of the Lord Jesus. They will remind the Lord of His mercies previously manifested toward them—as Jacob did in Gen 32:9-12, and the church in Ps 85:1-5. While thus engaged, faith will be quickened, love will become active, they will engage in more intimate transactions, and, with quiet resignation, will submit themselves to the will of God.

The Characteristics of True Prayer

The characteristics of prayer are as follows: It is engaged in humbly, in spirit and in truth, earnestly, fervently, incessantly, and by faith.

First there is *humility*. This is *the sensible, humble disposition of the supplicant, resulting from a view of the majesty of God, and of his own sinfulness, unworthiness, and impotence either to supply for his deficiency or to have it fulfilled by God*. Man must in all things be humble toward God. “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to ... walk humbly with thy God” (Mic 6:8). This must particularly be the case when engaging in prayer, for:

(1) The creature then approaches his Creator, the lowly one to Him who is majestic and exalted, the sinner to the Holy One, the despised one to the glorious One, and one worthy of condemnation to the Judge of heaven and earth who has power over life and death. When Moses approached the burning bush, the voice of God resounded, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exod 3:5). Here one may think in truth: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God” (Mic 6:6). Abraham said, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

(2) Humility in prayer is very pleasing to God. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps 51:17); “... for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy” (Hos 14:3).

(3) God hears and answers humble supplicants. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is

Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

(4) A godly supplicant finds a special delight—yes, acknowledges it as a great grace and as an answer upon his prayer—if, with such a humble and reverent disposition, he may have a view of the Lord’s majesty and glory, even if he received nothing else upon his prayer. However, he does receive immediate assurance that God has heard him and will provide according to His will, for He “giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5).

Secondly, it is done *in spirit and in truth*. To recite verbally what has been memorized (even if we pay attention to every word and even if it is our general objective to pray to God) but not to understand the matters, and if we do understand them not to desire them, is but a mocking with God. It is foolishness if we desire a matter, and to that end recite the Lord’s prayer, a morning or an evening prayer, in order to attain it.

Praying in spirit and in truth:

(1) Consists of a praying *with the understanding*; that is, to be acquainted with the Lord to whom one is praying; with the Christ through whom one approaches unto God; with ourselves in our perplexity and unworthiness; with the matter which we desire; and with the objective in requesting the matter. Not only is it necessary to be habitually acquainted with this (thus being able to be conscious of this if we were to give heed to this), but there must be an actual knowledge of all this. Thus, while presently praying, we shall perceive and observe that which is being expressed, and by such perception will be moved and made active. “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Cor 14:15).

(2) Is an *exercise of the will*, so that we desire the matters in truth. Our conscience must testify before God that we desire them, that this is our objective—not only when considering the matter as such, but also together with its attending circumstances, willingly renouncing all that stands in opposition to the desired matter. An unconverted person when hearing the desirability of holiness presented as such would perhaps say, “Yes, I want this, and I have a desire for holiness.” If, however, that sin which he views as an honest practice, cherishes, delights in, and deems profitable is observed in this light, and he perceives that he must fully renounce it, he does not desire holiness, but his sin instead. Alexander wanted to be Diogenes if he were not Alexander. The rich young ruler had a desire for salvation and the keeping of God’s commandments;

however, when he must part with his goods, he departs sorrowfully (Matt 19:21-22).

(3) Is also attended by *thoughtfulness and attentiveness*. We must be on guard that passion does not run ahead of the understanding and the will; rather, the engagement of the understanding and the will must precede, stimulate and govern our zeal. If matters proceed in this way, the heart will remain in a proper disposition. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Eccles 5:1-2).

Spirit and truth are absolutely essential in prayer, for:

[1] “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24);

[2] God requires the heart: “My son, give Me thine heart” (Prov 23:26);

[3] God knows the heart as well as the mind of the Spirit: “... for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men” (1 Kings 8:39);

[4] God desires truth in the inward parts (Ps 58:8);

[5] “Thine eyes (are) upon the truth” (Jer 5:3), “for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John 4:23);

[6] God hates and punishes such who approach unto Him physically and not with the heart. “Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me. ... Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder” (Isa 29:13-14).

Thirdly, there must be *earnestness and fervency*. This neither consists in calling out loudly, nor in the lengthy expression of words in fluent sequence, nor in a joining together of intellectual arguments in a passionate and mournful manner. All this a natural man can do. Rather, *fervency is an intense motion of the heart which is engendered by a strong desire, expressed in an understanding and thoughtful manner*. Fervency is the engagement of all the energy of soul and body. It penetrates through all opposition and overcomes the wandering of thoughts, the lethargy of the flesh, and the arising of unbelieving thoughts (such as, “It is in vain; God does not hear you; you will not receive it,” etc.), and the subtle deceit and insinuations of Satan, etc. The believer cannot so readily desist, for his desires are too strong; he perseveres. “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (Gen 32:26). With the Canaanitish woman, he pursues the Lord with prayer and supplication

(Matt 15:22). However, fervency neither takes away reverence for God, nor the quiet and composed disposition of the soul. Quietness and fervency go hand in hand here. Those who, so to speak, cannot bring themselves to pray, but rather avoid it and look up against it, ought to be ashamed. When, without their fault, an impediment presents itself at their devotional time, they are not grieved, but are secretly satisfied that they are relieved from the duty of prayer. One prays more to satisfy the conscience (having prayed) than to attain the fulfillment of his desires. Such permit themselves to be easily hindered by an unbelieving thought that they will not be heard. They do not have fervent desires toward a matter, and therefore move from the one matter to the other by merely enumerating them—matter, words, and desires being absent. This is an abominable matter. If you have no desires, then be gone. If you do not come with your own needs, you need not come simply because of God’s will. He does not desire such a lukewarm, listless, and slothful service.

The sacrifices and incense had to be ignited with fire, and our prayer must likewise be aflame with fervency. The reasons for this are as follows:

(1) Fervent supplicants are pleasing in God’s sight: “My suppliants ... shall bring Mine offering” (Zeph 3:10).

(2) An earnest prayer avails much with God. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

(3) A believer must be fervent in all that he does. “Be ... fervent in spirit” (Rom 12:11); “Be zealous therefore” (Rev 3:19).

(4) The examples of the saints, whose footsteps we must follow, stimulate us to be fervent in prayer. Their entire life consisted of prayer. David even arose at midnight. He was ahead of the dawning of the morning. He called, and he cried; he did not cease. It becomes us to do likewise, so that the Lord may perceive that it is our objective to know Him and to acknowledge Him as the Giver—as the One who gives freely—and that it is grace alone which can help us.

Fourthly, there must be an *incessant perseverance in prayer*. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17).

(1) Perseverance consists in making prayer a daily activity, disciplining ourselves not to neglect prayer and letting it become an unfamiliar practice. A Christian is a supplicant. Prayer is the very essence of religion (Gen 4:26).

(2) Perseverance consists in always being in a prayerful disposition. Even if one is not always expressly engaged in prayer, the heart must nevertheless always be near to God, be focused on Him,

and walk with Him. Such a disposition will, time and again, bring forth ejaculatory prayers—be it that we are in solitude, traveling, engaged in our work, or in the presence of people. Nehemiah prayed to God while he was speaking to the king (Neh 2:3-4).

(3) There are matters which God will not bestow all at once, but gradually, step by step—such as growth in faith, hope, and love, spiritual life, strength against sin, and sanctification. We must therefore persist in prayer for these during our entire lifetime.

(4) There are specific circumstances in which we are in special need of the help of the Lord and the guidance of the Spirit. Such is true when we must either leave or enter our home, to undertake a special task, to come into the company of people, to pay someone a special visit, come into situations where snares have been prepared for us, must make a choice between things, must hire a servant, must buy or sell, or encounter unforeseen circumstances. In each situation we must take refuge to prayer.

(5) There are matters which are extraordinarily oppressive and threatening, or which we desire in an extraordinary manner—their fruition being imminent. It can be true in both a temporal and spiritual sense that we are subject to uncommon temptation. There can be a sin which is extraordinarily strong; there can be a strong desire for more than a common revelation of God to the soul; we can be exceptionally desirous of being assured of being a partaker of Christ and salvation, or for a foretaste of heaven, etc. In such given circumstances the supplicant will persevere 1) by expressing the same prayer, not being able to desist until having received something; 2) by repetition of the prayer for the same matters at different times, either at the regular devotional hour, or occasionally outside of these times if there is opportunity to be alone and if the desire becomes fervent. In this manner we may persevere, looking unto the Lord (Ps 34:5) until the matter is resolved; that is, until the Lord grants us the matter (or some measure of it) or makes the soul so content with His will that the desires are no longer that vehement. Rather, we shall be quiet and satisfied, being assured that the Lord will make it well.

(6) Sometimes there will be a strong desire for the well-being of others—be it for the church in general, for one who has a specific or extraordinary need, or for the election of a minister, elders, or deacons. Or else one may have a strong desire for the well-being of a particular family or person, either in regard to body or soul, be it that they are converted or unconverted. Husband, wife, children, or parents can weigh heavily upon the heart. We may have a strong desire for their conversion and thus engage in prayer, not being

able to desist. This prayer will beget many supplications, and we shall frequently repeat it at other times, until the Lord either grants the matter or grants us a quiet confidence that our prayer for them has been heard and that the Lord will do it even if we were never to see it. It may also be that the Lord begins to hide Himself and we no longer dare to press the issue that strongly, or the Lord may exclude these people from our prayers, not wanting to be approached by His children in vain. When it is our duty to do so, however, we must not neglect it due to laxity or discouragement, but persevere until the Lord sweetly refreshes us, showing that our earnest praying has been pleasing to Him. We shall thus give the matter over into the hand of God, our prayer will return into our bosom (Ps 35:13), and our peace will return to us (Matt 10:13).

Exhortation to Persevere in Prayer

In order that we be stirred up to persevere, let us consider the following matters:

(1) Perseverance in prayer is everywhere recommended and commanded as being our particular duty. "... continuing instant in prayer" (Rom 12:12); "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph 6:18); "Continue in prayer" (Col 4:2); "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

(2) Perseverance brings the soul into a good disposition. First, it teaches us better to acknowledge God as the free Giver who is under no obligation to us; who may either give or not give; and if He gives, it is solely due to His grace and goodness. *Secondly*, it will cause the supplicant to be more humble, since he perceives himself as being unworthy of all grace and blessings. "The poor useth entreaties" (Prov 18:23). We shall esteem a matter much more if we have received it upon many prayers, and it will render us more joy if we may perceive in all this that God has granted it to us upon our prayers.

(3) Perseverance will cause us to obtain. Upon lengthy wrestling Jacob was blessed (Gen 32). After a long pursuit the Canaanitish woman received what she desired (Matt 15). Upon the frequent repetition of his prayer Elijah received rain (1 Kings 18). Upon the continual prayer of the congregation Peter was wondrously delivered out of prison (Acts 12). Upon persevering with one accord in prayer and supplication, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the day of Pentecost (Acts 1, 2). Since many pray but once for a matter and do not persevere, they also do not obtain it. Therefore see to

it that you refrain from everything which would hinder you in persevering, such as: lethargy, laziness, not believing that the matters will be obtained, divergence among our desires (being partially spiritual and partially focused on earthly things), and the instability of our desires. Such and similar matters cause the supplicant to readily desist from praying and prevent him from repeating it frequently. He thus must go forth without having received his desires. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

Praying in Faith

The fifth characteristic is that *prayer is offered in faith*. Prayer requires faith in a special sense. “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt 21:22); “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24); “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6).

First, this requires that the supplicant be a believer—a truly converted one (James 5:16). “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him” (Luke 18:7). As God hears the young ravens when they call to Him, He also does indeed hear an unconverted person, and will bestow some blessings upon him. This is but of a temporal nature, however, proceeding from the common goodness of God and apart from His promises. However, His children are the heirs of the promise and they pray through the Spirit of prayer. Therefore “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Ps 34:15); “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Ps 145:19).

Secondly, this requires that the supplicant appropriate all the promises of God’s Word as having been made to him, and that he thus consider himself to be an heir of the promise (Heb 6:17). He must furthermore consider that not only are all promises yea and amen in Christ (2 Cor 1:20), but that also for him they are certain and true—particularly those that pertain to the hearing of prayers.

Thirdly, it is requisite that the supplicant consider in a believing manner that:

- (1) God has ordained prayer as a means from man’s side to thereby give him all that he stands in need of.
- (2) God is not only omniscient and acquainted with the hearts of all men, but also that God during prayer looks upon the supplicant, takes note of the expressions of his desires, and hears this (Ps 34).
- (3) God is omnipotent and is able to grant him his desire,

irrespective of whether this is probable, the means are available, or if everything seems to be opposed to it. “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20); “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

(4) God is good and thus desirous to give the supplicant his desire. He is ready to forgive (Ps 86:5), loves freely (Hos 14:4), waits that He might be gracious (Isa 30:18), and rejoices over doing good to His people (Jer 32:41). In prayer, faith must acknowledge God to be such.

(5) God is faithful in fulfilling all His promises made to supplicants. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps 81:10).

Fourthly, the supplicant must with impression and with lifting up his heart believe that:

(1) Everyone who comes through Christ unto God, is pleasing to God in Christ (Dan 9:23; Acts 10:30, 33).

(2) The Lord is pleased with the yearning, tears, groaning, and the cries of His children to Him. “Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” (Song 2:14).

(3) God views his countenance in Christ, hears his prayer, and answers it according to His will. “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa 65:24). These matters mentioned the supplicant must deem to be sure and certain, for they are according to truth. The more he holds them before him with increased esteem, the more he prays in faith, the more pleasing his prayer will be, and the more certain it will be that he will obtain the matter for which he prayed.

However, many of God’s children are deficient here. They do not actively pursue these matters mentioned and these dispositions, and they randomly give expression to their desires. Many are also weak in faith—particularly to believe that God will hear them and grant their desire. “For,” they think, “how can I believe, since I am too sinful, and furthermore, I have experienced too frequently that I did not receive anything upon my prayer.” For their instruction it should be noted:

(1) That God does not hear for the sake of our righteousness, but for Christ’s sake. Therefore for him who is in Christ—the measure of the grace of light and life is immaterial as far as prayer being answered—it is the carelessness of his prayer and his failure to exercise faith in prayer which prevents his prayer from being answered.

(2) You cannot truthfully say that God has never answered your prayer nor that He has never given you what you prayed for. It is a certainty that God has frequently been pleased with your tears and groans, and frequently has granted you blessings upon your prayer. However, you have neither taken notice of these blessings nor related them to your previous prayer.

(3) There are individual cases where God, these matters having been brought before Him, has answered prayer relative to them. However, God has neither promised time, manner, nor measure. We do not know what is best, and if God had given many matters in those circumstances as we had asked for them, we would see subsequently that it would have been better had we not received them. The supplicant must therefore indeed believe that his prayer was pleasing to God and that He has answered it. He must subject himself, however, and with contentment submit himself to the will of God, doing so neither with murmuring, fretfulness, unbelief, nor entertaining the thought: “God does not love me and does not hear me anyway.” That would displease God and it would not benefit him personally.

(4) There are matters which we absolutely may not desire, and thus we may also not pray that we obtain them. The supplicant will then also not have liberty in prayer and it ought not to seem strange to him that he does not receive them. It is great foolishness to desire that God would give us that particular matter for which we do not even dare to pray. Therefore govern your desires according to the will of God and be not too passionate in your desires for temporal matters. Let God’s wisdom, goodness, and will be your delight. You will then be able to pray in faith and submissively wait upon it being answered. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6).

The externals of prayer are: time, place, gestures, and the voice.

The Time of Prayer

First, *the time of prayer*, considered in a general sense, is every day, every opportunity—always. Specific times of prayer are when we engage in it corporately—be it in public gatherings, in private gatherings, or in our individual *family worship* which ought to be conducted in every Christian family. This ought to occur both morning and evening, and if the opportunity permits it, also at noon. At this time the father—or if he is absent or unable to do this, the mother—must read a chapter, speak about it, catechize children and servants, sing a psalm together, and bow and offer a

prayer—all in accordance with the ability the Lord grants each one. Joshua desired to serve the Lord with his house (Josh 24:15), and Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). One must make of his home a small church, for then the Lord will bless the home. Children and servants will learn to fear the Lord and thus will experience salvation. It will beget mutual love, there will be mutual respect, restraining everyone from sin, and one will exemplify godliness to each other and follow each other in this way. We must make use of all these opportunities, and take them into consideration, both when praying and when following the example of others.

Private Devotions

In addition to this, however, everyone ought to have his private exercises of prayer, which are either prompted by extraordinary circumstances or are commonly conducted. There is no express command as to the time of private prayer; however, the saints, with their custom, have given us an example to be imitated: It is to be done in the morning, at noon, and at night. Observe this in the following passages: “Daniel ... kneeled upon his knees three times a day” (Dan 6:10); “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice” (Ps 55:17). These examples are to be followed—not as if prayer at such times is more pleasing to God and more effectual, but rather to bring us into and maintain continual communion with God. For, if we are neglectful in this, we shall perceive that communion with God will decrease. At first we shall not be aware of this, since there will be many ejaculatory prayers during the course of the day. We shall experience, however, that there will be a gradual decrease in ejaculatory prayer, and if we by renewal adhere to regular devotions, we shall perceive how far we have degenerated. Then we shall perceive that there was not such a steadfast basis for intimate communion with God, that there were no extraordinary encounters and illuminations relative to the mysteries of godliness. Yes, we shall perceive that the Spirit of prayer has departed from us and that of ourselves we are not capable of engaging in fellowship with God for some period of time. Therefore he who desires to be in an assured state, to have continual fellowship with God, to attain to a higher level of illumination and experience, and to fear God steadfastly, let him strictly observe his devotional time and let him not be neglectful in this—for the devil greatly strives to bring this about.

It is true that those who strictly observe their devotions will experience more assaults, darkneses, weaknesses of faith, and unusual strife than someone who is not steadfast in his devotions,

and who only prays when there are special circumstances and otherwise is satisfied with uttering some ejaculatory prayers on the run. This takes place due to having a deeper insight into self, due to striving for a higher measure of fellowship. Others do not observe this as closely and thus avoid such strife. Furthermore, by way of such extraordinary strife, such a person will grow in grace and become mature in Christ, whereas others continue without progress.

Someone may think, "I am much more spiritual when I utter ejaculatory prayers than when I specifically engage myself to pray. Then I become listless and darkened, and I cannot pray. I am therefore of the opinion that it is better not to observe a set time, and to pray only when the Spirit moves me." For your instruction you ought to note the following:

(1) The occurrence of listlessness and darkness is frequently due to laziness. One is not willing to wrestle, but at the very outset wishes to have that prayer which God generally does not give until the end. They desire to be carried at once rather than walk themselves. Scripture says, "Seek and ye shall find," but not "find and ye shall seek."

(2) Else, listlessness ensues due to thinking that at such times one immediately ought to have a greater measure of light, a more elevated disposition, and stronger exertion than apart from this time. If we do not immediately find this to be true, we cease from our work. Instead, we ought to use our devotional time to offer ourselves to the Lord and sacrifice ourselves to Him as a morning and evening sacrifice. Our being pleasing in God's sight is commensurate with our objective and activity in seeking to attain to this, and not whether or not He favors us with light and grace. We then wish to fly higher than befits the wings we have been granted, being of the opinion that to be in a more elevated disposition is in our own power and that we then ought to be able to make use of this accordingly. Or we may think that God, at the time set apart by us to separate ourselves in order to seek the Lord, immediately ought to enable us to engage in this duty with ease. If we then do not find it to be so, the hands become weak and we think, "God cannot be pleased with such a listless and fleshly performance. It will be better if I desist." It is thus that we shall "fall to the ground" due to wanting to fly too high at *first*, and will come in darkness because we initially had too strong a desire to see the light.

However, the cause of listlessness is generally in those who do not strictly maintain their devotion time in the activity and testimony which they may have sought. Because of this, as soon as they begin to observe that there is a godly person who has a greater

measure of light and more intimate communion and fellowship than they do, having thought previously that all was quite well and that good progress in godliness had already been made, they now perceive that they have but little light, life, and strength. This they categorize as listlessness and the withdrawal of the Spirit, whereas it is but their feeble disposition which causes them to succumb when a greater task is to be undertaken, or when they wish to engage in something which exceeds their spiritual strength. We ought habitually to have a devotional time and we ought to be active in harmony with the greater or lesser measure of our strength and spirituality.

The Place of Prayer

The *second* circumstance is *the place*. It is equally true that the location does not attribute worthiness to prayer. The only requirement is that it be a place of solitude where we are not under human observation.

(1) The Lord Jesus commands this: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret” (Matt 6:6).

(2) Such was the practice of the saints. Isaac went out into the field to pray (Gen 24:63); Jacob remained alone at the other side of the brook Jabbok in order to pray (Gen 32:24); Daniel went into his chamber (Dan 6:11); and Peter went up upon the housetop (Acts 10:9).

(3) The disposition of our soul and the matter which we wish to present demand solitude; rarely would one want to make this public to men.

(4) The proximity of people is detrimental to our concentration and takes our zeal away. If we but think that someone is in the vicinity and that we are being listened to, we shall be hindered.

The Physical Gestures Used in Prayer

Thirdly, there are *the physical gestures*. These also do not attribute worthiness and fortitude to prayer. Saints have prayed in various bodily postures; that is, being prostrate, sitting, and standing. Generally they have done so kneeling, however, this being one of the most humble postures.

(1) David recommends this: “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Ps 95:6).

(2) Such has been the practice of the saints. Solomon the king made his prayer while kneeling (1 Kings 8:54). Daniel kneeled three times a day (Dan 6:11). The Lord Jesus Himself kneeled and prayed (Luke 22:41); Stephen did likewise (Acts 7:60), and so did

Paul together with the congregation (Acts 20:36). How then can we do otherwise but to come to God in such a humble physical posture so that we may glorify God both in our bodies as well as with our souls?

The Voice in Prayer

The fourth circumstance is the use of *the voice*. This is not an absolute requirement, for we can indeed pray in a spiritual sense, doing so mentally without letting our voice be heard. The Lord has created us in such a manner, however, that we are able to express our thoughts by way of our tongue. Furthermore, it is His will that we deal with Him in harmony with our nature and He commands us that we should call upon Him (Ps 50:15), open our mouth (Ps 81:10), and speak unto God (Luke 11:2). The earnestness and the motions of the soul are at times so ardent that one opens the mouth spontaneously. Then we shall also not be plagued as much by wandering thoughts, and the soul at times gets opening by way of speaking and the motions of the soul are thereby quickened. However, we must take notice here of the place. If we are far removed from people, we shall indeed be able to lift up our soul in harmony with the motions of our heart. If we are in the proximity of people, our voice must be controlled in such a manner that we can hear ourselves but yet are not heard by others. To pray so loudly that others also hear it is an offense to the unconverted and an impediment even to godly hearers. The requirement that we enter our closet when we pray does not only imply that we must not be visible, but we must also be beyond the auditory reach of people. To pray so loudly that we can be heard on the street is as much as praying while standing or lying in the street.

Exhortations to Prayer

We shall now proceed to the exhortations to prayer.

In the *first* place, pray—for prayer *glorifies* God: “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me” (Ps 50:23). A believer is desirous to glorify God. Therefore, even if he were in need of nothing, he would nevertheless desire to worship God, being desirous to render unto God what is His due. He desires to acknowledge God as the One who is worthy of being worshiped, for in prayer we acknowledge all the attributes of God as they are revealed in Christ: His *righteousness and holiness*, because we cannot approach unto Him except through Christ; His *goodness*, because He has made available such a way of approach and is willing to hear those, and grant their desire, who go to God through Christ; His *majesty*, before which we bow ourselves with delight and reverence; His *omniscience*, in that He knows the heart and its intent; His

omnipotence, in that He is able to give everything; and His *faithfulness* in that He will fulfill all His promises—also those made to supplicants. It renders joy to the supplicant to behold these perfections. The acknowledgment of them renders him more joy than many other blessings received from God. Who is able to refrain himself from prayer? Who, being acquainted with this, does not become desirous to pray?

Secondly, the prayer of the upright supplicant is pleasing to God. However feeble his prayer may be, God finds delight in it; prayer is to Him as sweet incense (Ps 141:2). He testifies that the voice of the supplicant is sweet to Him (Song 2:14). And is it your desire to please the Lord and to do that which is pleasing to the Lord? Well, there is no better way to do so than by way of prayer.

Thirdly, God hears prayer; the Lord already sees the supplicant approach from afar, and He goes to meet him (Luke 15:20). And when he prays, He will hear him and will permit the supplicant to pour out his heart before Him. “His ears are open unto their cry” (Ps 34:15).

Fourthly, prayer is a glorious work, for it permits us to enter the inner chambers of the King of kings—of God, the Lord of heaven and earth. Yes, we enter heaven itself and speak in immediate proximity to the throne of grace. Prayer is a *sweet* duty. He who has been permitted to experience the softening of his heart and has been able to weep before the Lord; who, with opening, has been able to pour out his desire before the Lord; who at one time was privileged to supplicate; and who with strong crying and tears has been able to flee unto the Lord—all of this, as frequently as he thinks of it, will yet render him joy for a long time. If this occurs at an unusual place, he will be refreshed as frequently as he returns to that place or thinks upon it.

Prayer is a *sanctifying* duty. After having been with God on the mountain, Moses’ countenance had become radiant. When the Lord Jesus prayed, a holy radiance came upon Him (Matt 17:2). This still occurs if we have been much in prayer. Even if it appears that the matter for which we have specifically prayed has not been received, we shall nevertheless come away from prayer with a holy and radiant soul. Reflect upon this and your soul will take flight, and you will be desirous to pray.

Fifthly, prayer is the means whereby and upon which God fulfills the desires of believers. If they do not pray, they will also not receive. If God does not stir them up to pray for a desired matter, this is generally a sign that God does not intend to give it. “... Ye

have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). If, however, it is God’s intention to give something to His children, He generally *first* grants them prayer for this. The promises are for those who pray. When God promises to give a new heart, to cause men to walk in His ways, and to grant all manner of temporal and spiritual blessings, the Lord states as an additional blessing, “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek 36:37). The promises relative to prayer being answered are numerous: “And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee” (Ps 50:15); “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps 81:10); “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matt 7:7-8).

How much the saints have already received by means of prayer! By means of Moses’ prayer Amelek was defeated (Exod 17:11-12). By means of the prayer of Joshua the sun and moon were made to stand still (Josh 10:12). By means of prayer the barren Hannah received a son, Samuel (1 Sam 1:20). By means of prayer Asa defeated Zerah, the Ethiopian, and his thousand times thousand men (2 Chron 14:9-12), and Jehoshaphat defeated Moab and his confederates (2 Chron 20). Elijah unlocked heaven through prayer, so that it rained after three-and-one-half years of drought (1 Kings 18:42-45). Through prayer Elisha brought a dead person to life (2 Kings 4:35, etc). Through prayer Hezekiah received a fifteen-year extension of his life (Isa 38:5). What great things have believers received upon prayer! Moreover, God is still the same God. The promises upon prayer are still the same, and they were people of like passions as we were. Therefore, believers, if you desire or are in need of something, betake yourself to prayer.

Sixthly, consider furthermore that you will experience much more joy if God grants you something upon prayer than if you receive your wish without having prayed for it. For by means of prayer you have at the same time received a holy disposition. You have then been privileged to speak with the Lord in His immediate presence. Then you will notice that the Lord has received you as His child in Christ. Then it will be apparent that God has heard you and is benevolent toward you. You will have seen His perfections and the matter received upon prayer is in the form of a blessing. Therefore, accustom yourself to pray.

Godly reader, why do you complain about your spiritual deficiency and your bodily tribulations if you are so negligent in prayer, so lax to engage in prayer, so listless while praying, and so quickly finished? Pray if you are desirous for something. Such

excuses as made by many who are lazy in the practice of prayer—which cause grief to some tender godly persons—and will not avail here. If you were diligent in prayer, you would avoid these excuses or very readily have an answer for them, so that you would not be hindered by them. The primary mental obstacles are the following:

Mental Obstacles to Prayer

Obstacle #1: God is well-acquainted with my needs, anxieties, and desires. Why then do I need to bring them before God in prayer?

Answer: It is not to make something known to God with which He is unacquainted; rather, you thereby show that you are also acquainted with them and are sensible of them, as well as that you acknowledge God to be your only helper.

Obstacle #2: God has already decreed what I shall or shall not have. I cannot change that decree by means of prayer.

Answer: The secret things are for the Lord, but the revealed things are for us. God has bound us to the means and He wills that we believe and rely upon His promises made to conscientious users of the means. God has also decreed already how long you will live. Do you therefore desist from eating and drinking?

Obstacle #3: Many people do not pray and yet receive everything in abundance.

Answer: These are but temporal matters, with which you are not satisfied. These earthly goods are not a blessing to them, and due to their sins they abuse all the blessings of God to their destruction. Prosperity will be the death of the ungodly. However, the little that a righteous person receives upon his prayer is better than the abundance of many ungodly. The righteous have received it as a blessing and they have thereby been drawn to God. Furthermore, you are primarily concerned with the spiritual, and this the Lord will most certainly grant you upon prayer. You would have more if you would pray more.

Obstacle #4: I have prayed very much for various matters, but God does not hear me, and I do not receive them.

Answer: Perhaps you—as was true of Samuel—are not acquainted with the answering voice of God. Perhaps you have not given careful attention to what you have received upon prayer; or else, due to unbelief, you have not related that which you have received to your prayer. Perhaps you are too covetous and too bent on having your will, and you do not acknowledge it as long as you have not received everything which your inordinate lusts demand, there being no submission to the manner and the benevolence of that which is dispensed to you. If you take note of all this, you will

not be able to say that God has never heard your prayer and that you have never received anything upon prayer.

Obstacle #5: I lack all that I have heard said in this discourse on prayer. My heart closes up when I wish to begin.

Answer: You are focusing on a measure of spirituality in prayer which exceeds your measure of spirituality, and you want to pray at such a level of spirituality, or else it is nothing. If you are a child, pray as a child; if a man, pray as a man. God also hears the mourning of a dove and the chattering of a swallow; even sighing is not hidden from Him. God does not give because of prayer, but upon prayer. Such is not only true of a very spiritual and fluent prayer, but also for those feeble efforts in expressing desires. He does not despise the prayer of the destitute.

Obstacle #6: I sin time and again, and therefore I do not dare to come again unto God—it would be as if I were mocking with God.

Answer: When you prayed in a most acceptable manner and when God heard and answered your prayer, God saw all your future sins as if they were presently committed. It is God's will that we shall forgive our neighbor seventy times seven—this being required in one day. God, however, is infinitely more longsuffering and benevolent than man. Reconciliation has already been accomplished in Christ and you may accept this at all times to your continual justification. You do not have it in your power to keep yourself from sin; your old man is too evil and too strong for this. God permits sin to remain in you for the very reason that you would always be of a humble disposition and to make use of Christ daily. It would be mockery if you did not repeatedly have a heartfelt desire to sin no more, while yet praying for strength against and the forgiveness of sin. Since, however, this is the case with you, do not allow the fact that you sin repeatedly keep you from prayer. Rather, come all the more, since you are in need of forgiveness and strength, so that the grace of God may be glorified all the more.

Obstacle #7: I fear that I am not regenerated. What business do I then have to pray, since the prayer of the unconverted is not pleasing to God?

Answer: Pray because necessity compels you, and because you cannot go on without the matter you desire—even if your prayer could not be recorded on the register of virtues. God indeed hears the young ravens when they call to Him. God heard the crying of Ishmael, when he, having been laid under a shrub, would have perished for thirst. You desire to be converted, to be a partaker of Christ, to be holy, and to possess all spiritual benefits. The more you would be a partaker of them, the more it would be to your

liking. Such desires and motions are indeed the beginnings of regeneration and life. The Holy Spirit alone has wrought them in you and stirs you up to pray for them. Therefore follow the Spirit, and you will experience that your prayer is pleasing to God, and that He will repeatedly give you all that you need according to body and soul.

Since I consider to have satisfactorily dealt with all your concerns, take therefore the liberty to pray. However, see to it that you do not use these excuses to stimulate your laziness and to pacify yourself when you neglect to pray.

Guidance to Supplicants

It now remains to give some guidance to the supplicant who has been stirred up to pray as to how he is to conduct himself in the preparation for, exercise of, and reflection upon prayer.

The preparation for prayer must be contingent upon the condition in which we are. *If you are in a good frame*, you must *first* of all withdraw yourself from whatever you are occupied with and conduct yourself as if you were alone in the world and had nothing else to do but to walk with God. *Secondly*, while lifting up your soul, you must focus upon God as One who is worthy of worship, as the fountain of all good gifts, as omniscient, as omnipotent, or in whatever manner you may be conscious of God when you lift up your heart and engage in prayer. *Thirdly*, you must endeavor to bring about a reverent and humble disposition of heart. *Fourthly*, you must lift up your heart with a sigh for the spirit of prayer, for assistance, and for a blessing upon this exercise of prayer.

If you are in a backslidden condition, if you have just entertained vain thoughts and uttered vain words, if you have just committed a sin, if there were estrangement from God due to worldly concerns, or if something else has deprived you of liberty, causing you to be confused and restless, you must resolve to bring your heart where it belongs and endeavor to have the disposition of your heart humble and meek. Such a disposition must prompt you to arise with sincere intent and be firmly resolved to be on guard against those sins in the future. Furthermore, you must be resolved that if you were again to be overcome by those sins that you will battle against them. This is to be done so that your heart will not condemn you, and that instead you will be able with a clear and quiet conscience to approach boldly unto God. Furthermore, if you add to this what we have said concerning the previous disposition, you will be fit personally in your approach to God, and do so in a manner pleasing to Him.

However, you must generally not be occupied too long with preparation before actually proceeding with that which belongs to prayer itself. You could thereby easily come into darkness, become confused, and be less fit for the exercise of prayer.

In the exercise of prayer you must not limit yourself to a set order; rather you must adjust yourself to the disposition of your soul which varies greatly. If you are dull, you could begin by reading the Word of God and thus to permit your heart to be wrought upon by the truth—or else by the reading or singing of a psalm—in order to enliven your spirit thereby. If you are in a praising and worshipful disposition, you must not remove yourself from this, but rather adjust yourself to that disposition and immediately begin with prayer. It is to be done in this manner:

(1) Be on guard against routine in your initial address—against always using the same terminology. Rather, address the Lord with such language which either agrees with the disposition of the soul, is consistent with the manner in which the Lord reveals Himself at that moment, is consistent with the manner in which you wish to focus upon the Lord—or is subservient to beget humility, magnify the Lord, or strengthen your faith. Do not do this with too much premeditation, however, but proceed in this according to the inclination of your heart. Otherwise you will easily lose your prayerful disposition.

(2) We must not use pompous words in prayer nor merely link one Scripture passage to another; this will rarely move either the supplicant or the hearer. It is a different matter if we use a Scripture passage to urgently request the fulfillment of a promise, or to obligate ourselves to obedience.

(3) You must also not take great pains to express yourself fluently. It is sometimes necessary to pause for a moment—be it that the matter or the disposition of the soul requires this—and that you begin by renewal with new strength and vigor. You also need not concern yourself as to what you will say *first* or last; that would be more the work of the head than the heart. You also need not be concerned as to whether you repeat the same matters and words time and again, as long as it does not proceed from inattentiveness. However, you must carefully guard against the thoughtless use of the word *Lord* as an interjection.

(4) At times we can be dull and be in darkness when commencing prayer. However, then we must not immediately desist and depart; instead, we must persevere. It can happen that after great darkness very clear light ensues, and that a languishing soul can become very lively. If you cannot bring yourself to prayerful wrestling at all,

it is frequently beneficial to read a psalm prayerfully. If the soul becomes lively, you must cease to read and enlarge upon your spiritual motions. If these motions cease, you must again proceed to read prayerfully.

(5) At times we begin with much light and liveliness and then it suddenly becomes dark. We ourselves can be the cause of this. It can be that we were too high already, thus forgetting to be humble and reverent. Then we must readily sink down in our insignificance and begin by deeply humbling ourselves, conducting ourselves as a little child and thus climb upward step by step. If some business matter, worldly concern, or lust suddenly surfaces, we must be brought by this to view our sinful hearts, and while thus conscious of our sinfulness, present ourselves, with much humility, to the Lord in our wretchedness, seeking forgiveness and acknowledging that it is only grace that such a sinful man may speak to the Lord. If there be a sudden stirring of unbelief, we must wrestle against it by claiming the promises as they are confirmed in the Mediator. If unbelief pertains to a specific matter, especially physical matters, we must be very diligent in seeking to submit ourselves with full acquiescence to the will of the Lord as far as its outcome is concerned. The soul thus having been delivered from self-will and stubbornness and having been placed at liberty, may at times again receive freedom and liveliness in prayer—yes, sometimes more so than previously. If there is an interjection of the devil, we must reject this without paying attention and responding to it. Even though the soul may have been wounded thereby, we must nevertheless proceed to rise above ourselves and lift our hearts up to God. It will then hinder us less, and the Lord will occasionally take such a soul into His protection—so to speak, into a refuge—and at times will grant her more comfort. If not, He will demonstrate that our resisting and avoidance of the enemy is pleasing to Him. If, however, such darkness (when occurring in the middle of our prayer) is due to a withdrawal of the Spirit, and if this prevails in spite of our pressing on, it is advisable to condense and shorten our prayer, doing so in submission to God's sovereign will. Desistance must, however, in no wise issue forth from slothfulness, being secretly satisfied that we are now permitted to terminate our prayer.

(6) While praying—in the beginning, in the middle, as well as at the end—we must pray that we be heard, as we generally observe with David. Yes, not only must we pray, but we must also strive for a lively assurance that both we and our prayer are pleasing to God, and that He hears our prayer, answers it, and will most certainly give what we ask for. This assurance is neither

founded upon our godliness, nor upon our ability to pray, but rather upon the promises of the Word of God and the merits of the Lord Jesus, and because those spiritual desires we have expressed in prayer have proceeded from the Holy Spirit Himself. Such assurance will beget liberty and earnestness, and we shall conclude by giving thanks that we were privileged and able to pray—even if it were but a spiritual sigh—as well as that the Lord has heard it and will most certainly grant those desires according to His will. This will be concluded with a *believing* “amen,” that is, *it shall be*.

Reflection upon prayer consists particularly in the following two matters. It *first* of all consists in the preservation of this reverent and godly disposition, so that a luster radiates, indicating that we have been with the Lord—just as Moses came from the mountain with a shining countenance. Be very much on guard against those sins which we have confessed in prayer and against which we have made a holy resolution. *Secondly*, pay careful attention to the manner in which God answers our prayer.

That God answers earnest and believing prayers is evident, *first* of all, from God’s promises: “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee” (Isa 30:19); “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer” (Isa 58:9); “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer 33:3).

Secondly, it is evident from the prayer of saints for an answer: “Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me” (Ps 27:7).

Thirdly, it is evident from their declaration that God has answered them: “I sought the Lord, and He heard me” (Ps 34:4); “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me” (Jon 2:2). Observe this in Eliezer (Gen 24:15), in Elijah (James 5:17-18), David (1 Sam 30:8), Daniel (Dan 9:23), and others in their special temptations, which have been recorded for us in order that we would know that God answers the prayers of His children and we thus will be assured that He will also answer our prayers.

Fourthly, it is evident from the complaints uttered by the saints when God did not answer them. “I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me” (Job 30:20); “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not” (Ps 22:2).

Since God answers, you must also see it as your obligation to observe whether God answers you and how He answers you. It is not sufficient to commend the outcome to God and to believe that He

will make it well; we must also take notice of the outcome, however, and relate this to our prayers as being an answer to them, for:

(1) This will sweetly move you to be astounded and grateful that the Lord has heard your voice, and with David you will exclaim, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me” (Ps 116:12), which is a reference to verse 1: “He hath heard my voice.” This brings forth the confession: “This is the Lord’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps 118:23); “Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto” (2 Sam 7:18).

(2) The experience that the Lord answers our prayer engenders love toward God. “I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications” (Ps 116:1).

(3) It begets a desire for prayer and zeal in prayer. “Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live” (Ps 116:2); “I will confess ... and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found” (Ps 32:5-6).

(4) This renders more joy to a believer than the receiving of the matter itself for which he had prayed. For he would rather perceive that the Lord loves him than to enjoy everything outside of God.

(5) It is a great stimulus to lead an observant and holy life. Nothing so draws out our love than that a loved one shows his love to us. If we may perceive that God loves us and that His goodness is engaged on our behalf, we shall be willing to give our all to God: “...He hath heard my voice and my supplications. I will walk before the Lord” (Ps 116:1, 9); “What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly” (Isa 38:15).

The supplicant who attentively takes notice of the answers upon his prayers, will receive such glorious dispositions, along with the resultant fruit. And even if the Lord were to answer his prayers with nothing besides this, would it not be an explicit answer? He who prays and submissively leaves the outcome to the Lord, however, will indeed have his prayers answered by the Lord. Since, however, he does not give heed to those answers, and does not relate the gifts of grace as being answers to his prayers, he will rob himself of these desired fruits.

God’s Answers to Prayer

Many are as Samuel when he did not yet know the voice of the Lord. Such will ask: “When does God answer? Whereby can we recognize this answer?” For their instruction it should be noted that God answers at the outset of prayer, during prayer, and after prayer.

First, God at times answers at the outset of prayer. “Before they call, I will answer” (Isa 65:24); “At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth” (Dan 9:23).

The Lord shows that He wishes to answer if the Spirit moves the person to pray in an extraordinary manner, continually stirring up the soul, and does not give the soul any rest until she prays with free access. Yes, she may do so in such an intimate and amicable manner that it takes some effort to remember that one is but a man and a sinner, and thus to maintain a disposition of the deepest humility. What else is this but the Lord saying to you: “I know you; you have found grace in My sight; I love you. Mine eye will be upon you; I shall guide you with My counsel and shall hereafter take you to Me into glory.” The supplicant will also perceive it as such, will be astonished and rejoice, and cannot but say, “Abba, Father!”

Secondly, God answers during prayer:

(1) If after a period of darkness, troubles, and wrestlings, we become of a quiet and joyous disposition due to the soul, so to speak, hearing the voice of God: “Thou art Mine. I am thy salvation. Thy sins are forgiven thee, and your prayer is pleasing to Me.” Such an answer brings the soul into a holy disposition to serve the Lord with her entire heart to the glory of her God. This we observe in many of David’s psalms, in which he begins with lamentation, proceeds with joy, and ends with thanksgiving.

(2) If we strongly persevere in prayer for a particular matter—be it deliverance from an affliction or a request for a desirable matter—and the Lord reveals His friendly countenance to the supplicant, embracing him with His love. “Thou art greatly beloved” (Dan 9:23); “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor 12:9). When the Lord answers in such a manner, the supplicant frequently goes beyond what the Lord has said, thinking that it was a most certain promise that a given evil would not come, and that he would receive the desired matter. If, however, this does not occur, this can be very grievous to the supplicant at other times—as if the promise does not correspond to reality. The Lord had only shown, however, that the supplicant was pleasing to Him in prayer and that He would bring about this matter to his best advantage, not having made any promise as far as time and manner were concerned. If he had not taken the answer beyond its intended purpose, but interpreted it as he should have done, this would have resulted in a more sanctified disposition. He would have been content with the will of God, and the manifestation of the love of

God would have rendered him more joy, as if he received the matter according to his wishes.

(3) When He grants him a strong faith and full assurance that his prayer will be answered. This occurs either by application of the promises which pertain to the answering of prayers, or at times by an immediate operation upon his heart, without an indication of the manner in which it is to be answered. Such an answer is sufficient to cause the supplicant to rejoice, contentedly leaving time and manner to the Lord.

However, he will easily mislead himself, if he, when praying for a particular matter, by either the probability or non-probability of it, persuades his own heart that God has declared that he will have the matter, or that he will not become a partaker of it. If he relies upon this, whatever he has imagined will fail, and if he sets it aside, he renders himself unfit to persevere.

It occurs rarely—and that only to very few—that God grants someone immediate revelations concerning future events, although I am assured that the Spirit of prophecy or revelation (relative to future events) has not departed entirely from the church. If, however, such is the case, a person will know very well that God has revealed it to him. He will know it as well as if a familiar friend had said such and such to him. Whatever God reveals to the one is not regulative for the other. I advise a person against having any strong desire that God would reveal the outcome of a given matter to him in advance, lest he tempt the Lord and were to delude himself due to his strong desire.

If God assures someone that his prayer has been heard, he ought to deem that as being an answer to his prayer. He ought to rejoice in this and thank the Lord for this. He should leave the matter—as well as its execution—in the Lord's hands, and from the outcome conclude as to the manner in which the Lord fulfills His promise to hear his prayer. This will engender much steadfastness and inner peace.

Thirdly, God answers prayer by giving the matter prayed for subsequent to prayer. It is here that the supplicant must be very attentive.

(1) There are matters of which we know that God will not grant them all at once upon the *first* request, but will grant them step by step—such as growth in grace. If we have prayed for this in a heartfelt manner and if God grants some growth—strength against a particular sin, a more steadfast godly disposition of the soul, a stronger faith as far as our spiritual state is concerned, the exercise of a particular virtue, more liveliness and joy in the

expectation of eternal felicity, etc.—then we must note this as an answer upon all our prayers, particularly upon that prayer which had been so expressly uttered relative to a given matter.

(2) There are matters which God grants at once—such as deliverance from a present situation which is either pressing or threatening. This can also be true for a special matter which we desire to have, the outcome of which will either be evident within a short period of time, or there being no indication of time at all. If God grants the matter at once, he who takes note of the answer upon his prayers will readily observe that God has answered his prayer. God thus answered Eliezer (Gen 24:13-21). God does also grant the matter at a later time. If, upon reflection, we then become conscious of having prayed heartily for this, we shall also note this as being an answer upon our prayers, and we shall rejoice in a double measure about this. The Lord thus answered the prayer of Zacharias (Luke 1:13). God also answers our prayers when He does not give us a particular matter, but rather gives something else in its place, even though in some respects it relates to the desired matter. This—either in and of itself, due to some circumstances, or due to consequences—is nevertheless more beneficial and desirable for us. It was thus that Abraham’s desire was fulfilled when he, praying for Ishmael that the promises pertaining to the multiplication of his seed would be fulfilled through him, received Isaac.

(3) There are matters which pertain to others: either the church in general, a specific godly person, the conversion of our near relatives or someone else, or someone’s physical well-being. If God grants such a request, and we realize that we have prayed for this, we have indeed received an answer upon that prayer and it must make us doubly grateful and joyous. If we do not perceive this to be the case, we must nevertheless believe that our prayer has been heard. For every true prayer is heard, and God will either give the matter later—even if it be after our death—or the Lord will answer the prayer of the supplicant in a different manner.

Give heed therefore that you do not attribute it to the general providence of God if you receive something. More particularly, refrain from attributing it to chance, or from focusing only on the *secondary* causes—to which our corrupt nature is so inclined. Even Job himself came so far that he said, “If I had called, and He had answered me; yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice” (Job 9:16). Therefore acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all the good you receive—from the least to the greatest, and that which is common as well as extraordinary.

And if you receive something good, and cannot remember that you have heartily prayed for it, be all the more amazed that the Lord has thought upon you when you did not think upon Him, and that He has granted you more than you have ever requested from Him. Then say with Hagar, “Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me” (Gen 16:13). If, however, you receive something, and, when reflecting on time gone by, you become aware that you have prayed for this—even if it were in your youth—then relate this gift to your prayer as being an answer to it. Do not allow yourself to be hindered by your sinfulness, your weakness, or your deficiency in prayer, but acknowledge that the least upright sigh proceeded from the Spirit and that the Lord has therefore heard it. This will cause you to be grateful and express your love toward God. “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21).

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

The Lord's Prayer: Explained and Applied

In the previous chapter we have dealt with prayer in general, considering its nature, required internal qualifications, externals, necessity, and beneficial nature. We must now show the supplicant what the matters are for which he ought to pray and the order in which he must pray for them. This has been defined for us by the Lord Jesus in the prayer He has provided for us upon the request of the disciples. This is generally referred to as *The Lord's Prayer*, and is recorded in Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Matthew records it with a conclusion, whereas Luke omits it. This is not to suggest that the Lord Jesus did not add this, but is an indication that it was only His intent to give an orderly presentation of those matters which are to be prayed for. For the same reason, the evangelists, when relating identical matters, do so either in a more elaborate or abbreviated form. The one evangelist writes about this matter and the other about divergent matters, as they were not all present together at all occasions when Jesus either spoke or performed something. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus has said and performed many more things than could all have been recorded. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). However, what has been recorded is sufficient "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). The papists quote this prayer from Luke without the conclusion, and we do so from Matthew with the conclusion.

A Rule and Example for Our Prayer

The Lord Jesus has given this prayer as a rule and example to

which we must conform our prayers as far as matters and order; that is, in regard to the priority of each matter, such being the manner in which we are to desire them. It is, however, not mandatory that we repeat this prayer verbatim. The apostles, in their recorded prayers, have never repeated this prayer word for word. We may indeed pray this prayer, both in public meetings as well as privately; however, we are not obligated to do so. We must not be of the opinion that, upon having recited this, we have uttered a more holy prayer than if we had used our own words. This prayer is perfect in and of itself; however, he who prays has not prayed perfectly by merely having recited this prayer. If we do not have a correct understanding of each petition—yes, each word—if we do not have a holy and conscious desire for each matter, and nevertheless recite it, then it is a vain use of God’s Name. It is a mocking with God, as if He were served with that rattling off of words, the meaning of which is not understood and by which one’s desires are not expressed—even if one were to have a general opinion that he were praying to God. God demands the heart. Prayer is the expression of holy desires before God, and thus praying must be done in spirit and in truth. “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Cor 14:15).

For a better understanding of this prayer we must distinguish between the various parts. This spiritual prayer is robbed of its meaning, and it is a blatant distortion of the Word of this majestic God to divide this prayer into seven fabricated periods or time-frames. It is then presupposed that some matters are already past and should no longer be prayed for, whereas others would as yet be future and do not transpire in our time. Only one matter would relate to the present; however, which one this would be cannot be determined. Then there would indeed be nothing to be found for the spiritual needs of each individual. However, it can at once be observed that there are three divisions: 1) the address; 2) the petitions; and 3) the conclusion. The petitions can in turn also be divided as follows:

- (1) There is the most eminent matter which is to be the objective of all that is to be desired (this being the *first* petition), and the means which are to be desired to that end (which are the five subsequent petitions); or
- (2) in three matters we petition relative to God and three which relate to ourselves and our neighbor.

THE ADDRESS

“Our Father, Which Art in Heaven!”

Prayer requires that we turn to the person from whom we wish

to petition something. Since we are requesting matters in prayer which none can give but God, the supplicants thus turn themselves to God, the Father of lights, from whom descends every good and perfect gift. We acknowledge Him as *the only One worthy of worship*, before whom we bow ourselves with the deepest humility, being desirous to do so with our whole heart. Then we shall worship Him with all reverence, giving Him honor and glory, even if we did not need to request anything from Him. Since, however, we are always in need of something, we thus turn to God as the *fountain* of all that we are, of all that we have received, and of all that we desire to receive. We shall shrink back from requesting anything from anyone else—indeed, we shall not do so. When requesting something from man, we are requesting it both from God and from man as a means in God’s hand, he being under God’s command. The supplicant holds God before him as being *omniscient*, who knows and perceives what our needs and desires are and who hears the prayerful supplicant. He notes Him as being *the omnipotent One*, who can give what we desire—whether or not the means are at hand—yes, who can do more than we pray for, purely by the exercise of His will. He notes God as being *good*—not only to all men in doing them good by filling their hearts with food and gladness: “The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Ps 145:9), but toward His children in Christ, manifesting a fatherly and unfathomable goodness. He rejoices in doing well to them and He delights in mercy. He says to them, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer thee; open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it; let Me hear thy voice, for it is sweet.” He notes God as being *faithful*—as the One who fulfills all His promises to His children, the heirs of promise, particularly the following: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do” (John 14:13); “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). Such is the nature of God, and God deals with His children accordingly. Therefore the supplicant must also acknowledge Him to be thus if he is to please the Lord and have freedom in prayer. The act of prayer demonstrates that we acknowledge the Lord to be thus, for otherwise we would not flee to Him. However, a lively acknowledgment begets a lively prayer.

Not only does the supplicant turn to God as such a One, but he also addresses the Lord by using a name which either fits the disposition of the soul toward God, the need which we presently have, or the desire for a prayerful disposition, marked by both reverence and faith. The saints have used various addresses, such

as: “Lord,” “Oh Lord God of my salvation,” “Lord my strength,” “My God,” “Thou Lord the searcher of the heart,” “Thou art the God who has made heaven and earth,” and “Oh holy and faithful Lord.” The Lord Jesus generally used the address *Father*, and *My Father* in His prayers, and teaches us also to address God with the name *Father*. This is not to suggest that we may not use a different address, for the saints in the Old and New Testaments have generally used others. However, the name *Father* is the most intimate, congenial, soul-moving, and lovely name—which engenders the greatest reverence and confidence. Such is the privilege the Lord Jesus affords believers: They may address the majestic and living God with the name *Father*.

The Threefold Fatherhood of God

God is denominated as Father in different respects.

(1) He is Father by virtue of *eternal generation*, and thus in reference to God the Son. “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee” (Ps 2:7).

(2) He is Father by virtue of *creation and preservation*, and thus in reference to the angels and all men. The heathen referred to God as such. Adam thus becomes the Son of God (Luke 3:38), and the angels are called the children of God (Job 38:7). It is from this perspective that we read, “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us” (Mal 2:10); “A Father of the fatherless ... is God in His holy habitation” (Ps 68:5). When it is used as such, however, the name *Father* cannot give any comfort, but it will instill terror due to man having fallen away from Him and God having become a wrathful avenger in consequence of sin.

(3) He is a Father by virtue of *adoption*. God has eternally purposed to adopt the elect in time as His children. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph 1:5). In consequence of this purpose He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, thereby making them children of God. “Which (God’s children) were born ... of God” (John 1:13); “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). These He leads to His Son Jesus Christ, granting them faith whereby they receive Him to be their ransom and righteousness, and enter into a spiritual marriage-covenant with Jesus. They are thus united with Him, the Father of the Bridegroom, and he thereby also becomes their Father. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12); “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). It is with this in mind that the Lord Jesus says,

“I ascend unto My Father, and your Father” (John 20:17). The God and Father of Christ and believers is one and the same, but in different respects. Since believers are the children of God and have received the Spirit of adoption, they cry out, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). This name engenders in the believer love, liberty, comfort, and confidence.

The Use of the Father Name: The Practice of Believers in Both Old and New Testaments

The use of the Father name does not stand in contradistinction to the practice of Old Testament believers—as if they could not address God with the Father name. For they also were born of God, possessed faith in Christ, and had the Spirit of Christ (Ps 51:11) by whom they were led (Ps 143:10); God was their *Father* (Mal 1:6). “Is not He thy Father” (Deut 32:6)? They were the children of God: “I have nourished and brought up children” (Isa 1:2); “Ye are the children of the Lord your God” (Deut 14:1). They also addressed God with the name “Father”: “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth” (Jer 3:4); “Doubtless Thou art our Father. ... Thou, O Lord, art our Father” (Isa 63:16); “But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father” (Isa 64:8). It is thus a privilege which all believing members of the covenant of grace of all times have, and not a privilege of New Testament believers only. When the Lord Jesus taught his disciples to say “Father,” the Old Testament dispensation, as well as the ceremonial service, were still in force. The word “Father” is sometimes used to designate *the essence of the Godhead*; that is, in reference to a triune God: “... the Father of lights” (James 1:17); “Have we not all one Father” (Mal 2:10). Sometimes it is used in a *personal sense*, referring to the *first* Person in the divine essence, or rather, God as existing in the *first* Person. For we cannot extract a divine Person from the divine essence and view Him independently. However, we can distinguish between the essence and the Person. This is how the “Father” is to be understood in the following passages: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:14); “My Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).

Question #1: How is the word “Father” in the address to be understood?

Answer: Not in reference to creation and preservation, nor in reference to eternal generation, but in reference to adoption, for the supplicant comes with a childlike disposition.

Question #2: Must the word “Father” be understood in its essential or personal sense?

Answer: The supplicant, being stirred up to pray and directed in prayer by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of prayer, who intercedes with groanings that cannot be uttered) approaches the Father through the Son, and thus approaches God Himself as He exists in the *first* Person without exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit. We must refrain from attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible and from making too great a separation between the Persons and the divine essence. This causes some confusion in the minds of some beginners in grace, as if it would be a concern to the one Person if one of the three divine Persons were addressed more than another. We must proceed in simplicity here and be led by the Spirit to go to the Father through the Son as Mediator, and thus worship and address the one and eternal God.

The Lord Jesus does not only teach us to address God with the name “Father,” but He adds the relative and possessive pronoun “our”: *our Father*. Since the word “Father” pertains to gracious adoption, regeneration, betrothal, and union with the Lord Jesus—the Son of God—by faith, then the word “our” must not be understood to refer to all men, but only to the regenerated, believing children of God. An unconverted person is not a child of God, and thus he also cannot address God with the name “Father.” Even though he is God’s creature, God thus being his Father by virtue of creation, the use of the word “Father” can render him neither comfort nor liberty to approach unto God as such, for sin has fully separated him from God and His favor, and has subjected him to the wrath of God, so that God is a consuming fire and a terror unto him. There is no approach unto God except through Christ. Since the unconverted person is without Christ, he can therefore not come unto God and address Him with the name “Father.” The believing supplicant does not include only himself in the word “our,” but he includes all true believers—those whom he knows and those whom he does not know. He is a member of the church of God of which God is the Father. “And (I) will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:18). He thus includes the entire church of God when he says, “Our Father,” and thereby demonstrates his love to all the members of God’s family, expressing his faith that God is his portion, that he is permitted to address Him as Father, is a member of the family of God, and has communion with all the saints.

Question #3: May we not, when praying in solitude, say “my Father” instead of “our Father”?

Answer: The Lord Jesus has not furnished us this prayer so as to use its words verbatim. A believer, when in secret, frequently prays for himself, and then he may also specifically say “my Father” as Elihu did: “My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end” (Job 34:36).

Question #4: How must a weak believer proceed who is not assured that God is His Father? May he skip the words “our Father”? Must he think of God as his Father by creation? May he say in a wishful sense, “Oh, that thou wouldst be my Father”?

Answer: The supplicant, while in his closet, is not limited to the words of this prayer, but may use and present his own words as best as he knows how. No prayer is pleasing to God, nor shall it be heard, except it be offered in faith. The essence of faith does not consist in assurance, however, but in the entrusting of our soul to Jesus, He being our ransom and righteousness. The supplicant knows that there is no other way to approach unto God except through Christ. He approves of this way, desires no other way, chooses this way, and in his approach has Christ in view—be it in a habitual or an active sense. He longs for, prays to, yearns for, receives, and surrenders himself to Him. Being thus exercised, he perceives that he has an aversion for, is grieved by, and is greatly burdened by sin. Moreover, he longs and desires to obey the Lord in all simplicity, love, and filial fear, this being the objective he also pursues. If he were to give a general evaluation of one thus exercised, he would admit that such a person is a true believer and may freely call God “Father.” However, due to perceiving his darkness, slothfulness, and continual sinning, he does not dare to call God his Father, even though he perceives the aforementioned matters within himself. Such a person must put his unbelief aside, hold this for truth, and esteem God to be his Father as being the One who has given him this disposition and these fruits. To call God “Father” in prayer does not proceed from assurance, but rather from their judgment and heartfelt desires. Yes, these concerns and wrestlings are a proof of life and faith. Since in such a person there is not only love toward the Lord Jesus, but also to all His members and to His church, he includes them all in his prayer, and therefore not only says “Father,” “my Father,” but also *our Father*.

The Significance of the Phrase “Which Art in Heaven”

The Lord Jesus causes us furthermore to say, “which art in

heaven.” It must be noted here that it says “heavens”²² and not heaven as in the *third* petition. Hereby the following is conveyed:

First, “in the heavens” does not refer to a location, for God is infinite. He fills heaven and earth and infinitely exceeds them. “Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee” (1 Kings 8:27).

Secondly, “the heavens” also does not refer to the *third* heaven, which is the abode of holy angels and glorified saints, the paradise of God, the house of the Father, the throne of God, and the place where God’s glory is seen. The *third* petition refers to this, but such is not true here. Mention is made here of “the heavens,” and this includes all the heavens. The supplicant is thus not limited to a local perception of the *third* heaven, but rather it lifts the supplicant above the edifice of heaven and earth—all of which vanishes from the heart and eye of the supplicant as something insignificant. It causes us to view God as the infinite One; as most majestic, glorious, omnipotent, and invisible; and as the One who dwells in unapproachable light, who covers Himself with light as with a garment. Both the nature and the disposition of the saints teach them to view God as such in prayer, with a lifting up of the heart and eye on high (without thinking of a locality) unto God as being invisible and all-seeing.

There is no contrast here between the supplicants of the Old and New Testaments—between Jerusalem, the temple, the Holy of Holies, and the *third* heaven. It is not so that in the Old Testament they had to say, “Oh God, who dwellest in Jerusalem and between the cherubim,” and that we in the New Testament may straightway go to God and say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” For also in the Old Testament supplicants lifted up heart and eye to God in heaven: “Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord” (Isa 38:14); “Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens” (Lam 3:41); “Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens” (Ps 123:1). They prayed that God would look down upon them from heaven: “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory” (Isa 63:15), and God heard them from heaven: “He will hear him from His holy heaven” (Ps 20:6). In this they are on equal footing with New Testament believers and it removes the thought that there is a distinction between the Old and New

²² This statement, and the paragraphs that follow, are based on the rendering of the Statenvertaling, which reads as follows: “Die Gij zijt in de hemelen,” that is, “Which art in the heavens.”

Testaments in this text. The fact that they prayerfully turned their countenances toward Jerusalem, saying, “O Shepherd of Israel. ... Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth” (Ps 80:1), indicates that in prayer they approached unto God through the Messiah. They prayed in His name—He being depicted by the mercy seat, which was overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim. Likewise, we in the New Testament, when praying in His Name, do not approach unto God in any other way but through the Mediator. Since they thus in both cases approached unto God by way of the sacrifice of the High Priest Jesus Christ—who then had to come and now has come—they were both pleasing to God and were heard, God being pleased with the sacrifice of His Son. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 17:5).

The Address Renders Liberty and Reverence

With divine wisdom the Lord Jesus conjoins these two matters in the address: “Father, our Father, which art in heaven (Dutch: the heavens).” The word “Father” gives liberty to lay before and to unveil to God, as Father, in an intimate manner our needs and desires—and to pray for their fulfillment. And, lest we lose our reverence and awe due to such intimacy, we must add to this the awe-inspiring expression, “which art in heaven.” However, lest we be fearful to approach due to our awe for His lofty majesty, we add the word “Father” to it. Filial freedom and reverence must go hand in hand. Finally, we say “our” to express our love for God’s children.

The Lord Jesus thus teaches us that we are to use an appropriate address in our prayers. If we address God out of form and custom with a certain name which so happens to come across our lips—without a conscious acknowledgment of God, ourselves, and the condition in which we are—it shows that as supplicants we are void of spirituality, for it is sinful to begin prayer in such a manner. We must also not occupy ourselves for a time considering by which name we shall address God. This generally causes a prayerful disposition to vanish. If, however, the supplicant separates himself from everything and turns to God, such a prayerful disposition will engender a fitting address—be it by considering God’s goodness, omnipotence, mercy, truthfulness, holiness, glory, and majesty—or else our need, fear, or anxiety will suggest a fitting address which will bring our soul either into a prayerful frame or further enhance this frame. However, if no particular name comes to mind, then be at liberty, upon the command of the Lord Jesus, to address God as “our Father which art in heaven.”

The Believer's Approach to the Father

Generally, an attentive and prayerful frame will bring forth a sigh and one will begin with “oh!” If you are in the company of people, you must refrain yourself so that your sighing voice will not be heard by others; this will hinder them. Such sighs must also not be feigned, for that is hypocrisy. These sighs must also not be the result of the condition of the body; they are not related to prayer. They must also not be the result of pretense or custom. This belongs to the realm of routine, which ought to have no part in prayer at all. Instead, such a sigh must be the voice of the soul and proceed from the Holy Spirit, who “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26).

(1) Sometimes the soul is so overcome with either sorrow, physical sorrow, or soul's grief, that she cannot utter one word. She presents herself before the Lord, however, and pours out her heart before the omniscient One with a heartfelt sigh—with the voice of a turtledove. This is pleasing to Him, and the Lord, knowing the mind of the Spirit, insists on hearing it: “O My dove ... let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice” (Song 2:14).

(2) Sometimes the soul is empty. She is tense, desirous to pray, but no matters come to mind, and desires for a given matter are neither lively nor do they stir up the soul. What must she do? Leave her closet? That she cannot do, for she knows that she lacks everything. And if there is nothing in particular, a sigh comes forth out of her emptiness which cries for fulfillment—a sigh which God understands well.

(3) Sometimes the soul is focused so intently upon a desired spiritual matter, having such profound insight in it, and her desires being so intense, that she cannot find words to express those inexpressible matters and desires. Therefore, she cannot do otherwise than make this known by way of a sigh which expresses far more than many words could do.

(4) Sometimes the soul is in a sinful condition. She would desire to approach, but she is ashamed, does not dare to come, and hides herself. She crawls, so to speak, to the throne of grace, having no courage to speak. She then lets herself be heard by quiet sighs, which at times are accompanied with quiet tears—this being a delightful manifestation of a penitent soul.

Even though the supplicant may use various addresses in prayer, there is none so sweet, so soul-stirring, and so beneficial as saying “Father,” “my Father,” and “our Father.” When the supplicant, by faith, engages himself in meditation upon the word “Father,” and views it from God's perspective, his own perspective, and all that

is comprehended in that relationship, this can then bring the soul into ecstasy and cause her to lose herself in adoration.

The supplicant sees himself as a worm and, moreover, as one who is so sinful within and without, so despicable, hateful, and damnable that no one could even cast an eye of pity upon him. It is thus due to the wondrous longsuffering of God that he has not long since been cast into hell already. To think that he has been delivered from the eternal destruction in which the majority of men, who are no worse than he is, sink away! And beyond that, to think that he has been adopted as a child of God—adopted to be an heir of God and a fellow-heir of Christ in eternal glory! That transcends all the comprehension of both angels and men. To think that he may address God by the name “Father,” and “my Father”!

When the supplicant focuses upon God, whom he may call Father, and considers God in His majesty, glory, holiness, and fullness of perfection; when he considers furthermore that God, in all that He is, is there for him so that he might be filled, satisfied, and be made joyful in the only blessed God; and when he finally considers that he is a partaker of all felicity—this cannot be comprehended to all eternity. This is able to bring the supplicant into such ecstasy, that body and soul are not capable of enduring the wondrous goodness of God; the soul would be overwhelmed due to astonishment and joy, and the spirit would succumb.

When the supplicant reflects upon the relationship in which he is to God, and God to him, he must exclaim, “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes” (Ps 118:23). For, if God is his Father, then God has loved him with an eternal and fatherly love. Then God’s omnipotent, faithful, and fatherly eye is upon him to protect him against all evil, to provide for him in all the needs of body and soul, and to cause all things to work for good for him. Likewise, God’s fatherly tenderness and mercy are engaged toward him to have pity upon him when he comes into circumstances of misery, need, and death. God thus makes him an heir of all the benefits of the covenant of grace. God will therefore hear him as his Father when he calls upon Him. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him” (Matt 7:11). If the Lord does not immediately give what we desire, He will do it at a time which is best for us and He will give that which is to our benefit. It is fatherly love when He gives and it is fatherly love when He withholds. And you—entrust everything fully to your Father without fear and concern. As a child, honor

your Father: fear Him, love Him, and obey and serve Him with a willing soul.

Behold, all this—and more than we are able to express—is included in this address. Therefore, attentively make use of this in faith, and thus proceed to the matters you are to pray for as comprehended in the following six petitions.

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed Be Thy Name

The goal stimulates the worker, defines what means he will use, and renders the use of grievous means easy. The irrational animals, even though they are not acquainted with the goal, are driven by a natural instinct toward the goal set for them by God, and know which means to use unto that end. Rational man, however, prior to undertaking something, has something in mind which he desires to have. This becomes the goal he wishes to attain. In proportion to how necessary, beneficial, and desirable the attainment of that goal is to him, so intense will his use of the means be. As true as this is in the natural realm, so true is it in the spiritual realm. In proportion to someone's acquaintance with and love for spiritual matters, so slothful or zealous he will be. In accordance with this he will either not be able to separate himself from the world, or it will be easy for him to forsake the world and to make a wholehearted resolution to only seek the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification, as well as that He might be his life and joy.

Our ultimate goal is primary in our considerations and comes last in the execution of our plans. At first a person has a particular matter in view. This he pursues; he focuses upon it; he has nothing in mind beyond that. The means which he uses to obtain such a matter in and of themselves are not related to the various goals which he pursues. However, his use of the means is not the end of the matter; rather he uses that which he has attained to attain something else. In turn, he uses this again to attain something else. He thus proceeds until he can enjoy the matter he originally had in view; at that point his activity terminates. This is also applicable in the spiritual realm. This will enable you to determine how sincere or insincere you are in the pursuit of your objective, as well as how and for what reasons the means are used.

The Objective of This Petition

In this prayer the Lord Jesus teaches what the ultimate goal must be which we are to hold before us, what our primary desire must be, and the end we must desire and present in the other petitions.

Question: It is a certainty that our ultimate goal is the primary objective of our pursuit, and that the Lord Jesus in the *first* petition establishes the glorification of God's name as the goal as to why we are to desire the other petitions. Is the desire for, and the seeking after, our deliverance and salvation (that is, of conversion, faith, and holiness, without being motivated to that end purely and alone by the love for and having as objective the glorification of God's name) not sinful self-love, and therefore must be neglected until we have *first* received a love for the glorification of God? Ought not that love and that objective alone motivate us to seek for our deliverance and salvation?

Answer #1: If someone has eternal salvation as his objective—without having any further objective—and in order to attain this seeks the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification by a variety of means such as heartfelt prayer and supplications to God, the exercise of faith, an active opposing of sin, and the exercise of godliness, then his activity is governed by the ground rule mentioned above. Salvation is the primary objective of his pursuit, and he uses means to obtain this—this being his ultimate goal.

Answer #2: This prayer is perfect as far as substance and order are concerned. In order for someone to pray this perfectly, he must be perfect himself. In this life no one is perfect, however, and therefore no one is able to pray perfectly. What then is to be done? Must he then, in order not to sin, refrain from praying because his prayer and actions are deficient and polluted with sin? Absolutely not, for otherwise all religion would cease. However, it is true that his prayer and works cannot be placed on the register of perfect virtues. He can thereby neither approach unto God, exist before Him, nor obligate God to hear his prayer. The uprightness of his objective, and his activity issuing forth from this objective in pursuing this ultimate goal, are pleasing to God, for he pursues this goal and is active with Christ in view; and his activity is spiritual and has spiritual vitality. God will hear this deficient prayer, not because of the virtues to be found in it, but according to His fatherly goodness and promise rooted in the satisfaction of Christ.

Thirdly, if someone is as yet not acquainted with this ultimate purpose, that is, the glorification of God's Name, and is not motivated out of love for this but only has his salvation and eternal security in view, then he has something in view which God commands. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12); "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30). Salvation was the objective and the apostle directed him to the means whereby this is to be obtained: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,

and thou shalt be saved” (vs. 31). A person who is likewise seeking to be saved, and to that end endeavors to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus, is not active in an entirely correct sense, but neither is his activity wrong. It is God’s will that he endeavor to be saved and that he enter upon the way of believing in Christ. When he does this, he pleases the Lord and He promises to grant salvation to such persons.

Answer #4: God does not lead His children in such a way that they will *first* have a love for the glorification of God’s Name and that nothing but love and the pursuance of this goal engages them to seek their salvation unto repentance and faith. I repeat, God does *not* lead His children in this way. Never have the prophets or the apostles guided their pupils in such a direction. He who teaches such a way and wishes to lead others into that way, reveals that he himself is but in the state of nature and that the way of salvation is hidden for him. As a blind guide he misleads the souls which come under his care, for in that way they will never be saved. Never will anyone attain the highest level of holiness if he does not begin at the lowest level. We do not begin with the highest step and then descend to the lowest step; instead, we begin with the lowest and ascend to the highest.

Answer #5: A spiritual and wise father, who is going to teach his child to read and write, will not endeavor *first* to cause his child to be acquainted with and delight in the glorification of God’s Name in order that he would thereby be motivated to learn how to read. He knows that such is beyond the reach of the intellect of a child. Likewise God leads His children in accordance with their comprehension. First He puts them on the lowest rung in order to lead them higher step by step. A beginner in grace, even though he is not motivated by a desire for the glorification of God’s Name, is nevertheless not opposed to this. Rather, he approves of this in accordance with the measure in which this is presented to him and can be comprehended by him. Yes, time and again he ends in this when he thanks God for that which he has enjoyed.

When we pray, “Hallowed be Thy Name,” then we must not imagine that we are praying on behalf of the Lord, as if we could contribute anything to him, and as if by hallowing His Name we could increase His glory. To do so would be to dishonor God, for He is perfect and all-sufficient. “Neither is (He) worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing” (Acts 17:25); “My goodness extendeth not to Thee” (Ps 16:2); “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect” (Job 22:3). It is not God’s felicity,

but rather man's that he knows, loves, serves, and praises God. It is a grace that he may do so, and it will be the highest purpose and felicity of his life if he is permitted to do so and in actuality does this. The following is to be noted in the words of the *first* petition: 1) the object: *Thy Name* and 2) the desired activity: *be hallowed*.

The Object of this Petition

The object is "*Thy Name*." A name is a word whereby we distinguish one thing from something else when we speak of it. Every person has his own name. The word "name" sometimes signifies a person. "The number of names (ὀνομαστων) together were about an hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15). Each person has his own name and thus there are as many names as there are persons. Therefore the name of God signifies God Himself. "And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed" (Lev 24:11); "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell" (Prov 30:4). This refers to God's essence, and His existence is incomprehensible and inexpressible for you. This is also evident from such passages in which the name of God is said to be active (Ps 20:1), men are said to trust in God's name (Isa 50:10), worship His name (Zeph 3:9), and fear that name (Mal 4:2). Sometimes the name of God is understood to refer to the names by which God calls Himself or allows Himself to be called—such as *Jehovah*: "I am the Lord (Jehovah): that is My name" (Isa 42:8). The name of God is also understood to refer to God's reputation—just as we say of a man that he has a good name, that is, testimony, esteem, reputation. This is also signified relative to God. "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name" (Josh 7:9). Here the name of God signifies God Himself, His essence, His perfections, and in some respects, also His reputation.

The Mandated Activity

The deed or activity we are required to perform relative to God's Name is *that it be hallowed*. Since various motions are comprehended in the word "to hallow," there is confusion among those who have but little knowledge as to what is to be understood by the hallowing of God's Name. In order to have a more discerning knowledge it needs to be noted that "to hallow" is to be understood differently when it refers to a person or a matter than when it has God as its object. When man or something else is its object, it signifies:

- (1) To be separated from all others and to stand alone.
- (2) To be devoted to God, to appropriate to God, and to surrender to His lordship and service.
- (3) To prepare and qualify for the service of God. It thus means

to illuminate, regenerate, restore the image of God in man, to render holy and virtuous, and to render someone radiant and glorious due to holiness.

(4) To be holily engaged in the service of God—in a task commanded by God. Occasionally, this is attributed to God and sometimes to man.

If it is attributed to God, then it signifies:

(1) The separation of a people or a person in order to penalize them for their sins. “Prepare²³ them for the day of slaughter” (Jer 12:3).

(2) The separation, preparation, and qualification of nations to execute His judgments over others: “And I will prepare²⁴ destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons” (Jer 22:7).

(3) To set apart a matter or day for His service: “I have hallowed this house” (1 Kings 9:3); “Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod 20:11).

(4) To separate a nation or a person from others to be His property and for His service: “I hallowed unto Me all the *firstborn* in Israel” (Num 3:13); “I am the Lord which sanctify you” (Lev 20:8). It also signifies a rendering fit for His service; that is, to change, make holy, and render spiritual. “Sanctify them through Thy truth” (John 17:17); “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess 5:23). In this manner God has also set apart the Lord Jesus to be a Surety and a Mediator, qualifying Him by the union of the two natures and the extraordinary infusion of the Holy Spirit. “...Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world ...” (John 10:36); “For it became Him ... to make the captain of their salvation perfect²⁵ through sufferings” (Heb 2:10).

When “hallowing” is attributed to men, it signifies:

(1) To set apart—upon God’s command—a day, matter, or person for the service of God. There is the hallowing of a day: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod 20:8). There is the hallowing of a matter: “So they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days” (2 Chron 29:17). There is a hallowing of persons: “Sanctify unto Me all the *firstborn*” (Exod 13:2).

(2) To separate ourselves, to consecrate ourselves to God, or to prepare ourselves for the service of God. “Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow” (Josh 7:13); “Let us cleanse ourselves from all

²³ The Statenvertaling reads as follows: “Heilig ze tot den dag der dooding,” that is, “Sanctify them for the day of slaughter.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Statenvertaling uses the word “heiligen,” that is, “to sanctify” where the KJV uses “to make perfect.”

filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).

All these meanings of the word “to hallow” are not applicable here. However, we have pointed them out since you need to be acquainted with them in order to be free from any confusion in this respect, and to be all the more capable of understanding the meaning of the word “to hallow.” This is a hallowing which has as its object neither man nor anything else.

The reference here is to a hallowing which has God as its object. Sometimes this is attributed to God and sometimes to man.

God Hallows Himself

God hallows Himself: “And I will sanctify My great name” (Ezek 36:23). God hallows Himself both in the works of nature and of grace, revealing to man what manner of God He is.

He hallows Himself in the works of nature.

(1) He does this when He reveals Himself as being *the only God*. “I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; ... beside Me there is no God” (Isa 44:24, 6). Man can discern this from creation: “... being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20).

(2) He does so when He reveals His *goodness* by means of temporal blessings. “Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven” (Acts 14:17); “The earth is full of Thy riches” (Ps 104:24).

(3) He does so when He demonstrates His *justice* in punishing sinners. Even the heathen perceive this, for one of them states, “I have long been in doubt as to whether God rules over everything or whether everything comes about by chance. However, the punishment of Rufinus at last terminated this train of thought and vindicated God. They (the ungodly) are exalted in order that they will be crushed all the more severely.” This is frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Such is true in these two texts: “Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her” (Ezek 28:22); “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen” (Exod 14:18).

(4) This occurs when the Lord reveals His irresistible omnipotence in His works: “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Exod 9:16). Consider also

Dan 4:34-35, “I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

However, God hallows Himself in a special sense in the work of grace wherein He reveals Himself as:

(1) A *righteous* God, who cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and who cannot be reconciled to the sinner except the committed sins be fully punished. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness” (Rom 3:25).

(2) A *good* God: “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. ... He saved us” (Titus 3:4-5).

(3) A *wise* God: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10).

(4) A *faithful* God: “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor 1:20).

(5) A *truthful* God: “But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay” (2 Cor 1:18).

(6) An *immutable* God. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath” (Heb 6:17). Therefore the Lord says, “But My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed” (Isa 54:10).

In these ways God reveals His perfections and hallows His Name.

The Manner in Which Man Hallows

Man is also said to hallow, either himself, other people, or a variety of matters. It then signifies:

(1) The *separation* of ordinary things for religious purposes: “Sanctify unto Me all the *firstborn*” (Exod 13:2); “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 13:2).

(2) *To devote to*, to consecrate to God, to surrender to the service of the Lord, or to sacrifice: “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). The following passages refer to this: “But *first* gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor 8:5); “And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel” (Isa 44:5).

(3) To *prepare* for the service of the Lord: “Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice” (1 Sam 16:5).

(4) To be involved in a holy manner in the work of the Lord. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod 20:8). To this also belongs a being godly and holy in the totality of our life and deeds. “Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lev 11:44).

Man is also said to hallow God. Such hallowing, however, does not signify all that which we enumerated, for God is perfect, and nothing can either be taken away or added to Him.

However, the hallowing of God’s Name consists, *first* of all, in *knowing* and attentively observing where and in what manner God hallows His Name—in His works as well as in grace, as has been discussed above. He who will hallow God’s Name, must take note wherein God reveals Himself, and which perfections of God manifest themselves in this. “Come, behold the works of the Lord” (Ps 46:8); “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord” (Ps 107:43).

Secondly, there must be *a recognition* and a joyful approbation that God is such a God. “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (Rev 16:7).

Thirdly, God’s Name as such must be *glorified*, exalted, and praised. “O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever” (Ps 117).

(1) Such occurs with the heart: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Ps 103:1); “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Pet 3:15);

(2) with the mouth: “I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works” (Ps 145:5);

(3) with our life and our deeds: “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

Fourthly, we must show to others how glorious a God our God is. From the Holy Scriptures and His works, both His common and extraordinary providence, we must point out which perfections of God manifest themselves in a given situation, and thereby we must lead them to the knowledge, acknowledgment, love, and glorification of God. Everywhere in the Psalms David exhorts everyone to do so—also in Ps 148, where he addresses angels, hosts, kings, princes, judges, young men, maidens, and old men. He stirs them all up to praise God and to behold the glory of the Lord in all His works of creation, preservation, government, and redemption of His people. He concludes in verses 13-14 by saying, “Let them praise the

name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord.” The psalmist also makes mention of animals, birds, fish, the sun, and trees. This does not mean that they are able to do this, but that they render man reasons to glorify God; and he ends the book of Psalms with: “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord”!

The Implication of Praying, “Hallowed be Thy Name”

Thus far we have demonstrated how and whereby God’s Name is hallowed. It now remains to demonstrate what it means to pray, “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

First of all, it consists of an expression of strong love and a desire that God’s Name be glorified and praised. “Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified” (Ps 70:4).

Secondly, it includes an acknowledgment that we and all other men are not worthy that God would manifest Himself to us even in the very least, that we should rejoice in this revelation, and that we should put the praises of God in our mouths. When the holy angels glorified God and thrice exclaimed “Holy,” they covered their countenances (Isa 6). Abraham said, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). Thereby we acknowledge that it would be God’s incomprehensible grace and goodness if the Lord were to permit and enable us to glorify Him. For this grace we then pray.

Thirdly, it implies an admission of impotence to do this, for he who delights in the hallowing of God’s Name finds himself perplexed from all sides. His understanding is too darkened, his will too inert, and his affections too lethargic. He is neither able to begin, nor to proceed, and if he does anything it is more the work of his head than his heart and he is therefore inclined to desist. He thus perceives that it must be given him out of grace, and therefore he says, “O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (Ps 51:15).

Fourthly, it is indicative of faith that God is able to do it, is also willing to give it—and indeed does give it. “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise” (Isa 43:21); “That they might be called ... the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isa 61:3). The Lord Jesus would not put these words in our mouth if it were not the Lord’s intent to grant this to the supplicant.

Fifthly, it consists of a heartfelt entreaty:

(1) That God would reveal Himself as He is, and that He is the One who rules everything from the least to the greatest, He being the One who punishes and blesses, and who gives both victory and defeat in war. “O Shepherd of Israel ... shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine” (Ps 80:1-3); “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth ... show Thyself” (Ps 94:1).

(2) That both the supplicant and others would see and acknowledge God as He reveals Himself in His Word and in His works by His Spirit—as God is indeed pleased to do. “... the wicked ... will not behold the majesty of the Lord” (Isa 26:10); “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. ... So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Ps 58:10-11); “Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it” (Ezek 37:14).

(3) That both the supplicants and others—by reason of knowing the Lord as being such a majestic, holy, glorious, good, and omnipotent Lord—would, in all that He does, love, fear, obey, and praise Him; and by reason of that disposition and desire they initiate everything, are active as such, end in this, and in very deed exclaim, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever” (Rom 11:36). All this is included in the prayer, “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

Having a strong love that God will be glorified among men, in view of his unworthiness to be permitted to do so, and due to his inability to do so, the supplicant presents himself in faith to the Lord as a child, coming to God as his Father in Christ, and prays, “Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children” (Ps 90:16); “Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day” (Ps 71:8).

The Vain Use of this Petition

How far man is removed from conducting himself as such, however! The heathen neither know, desire, nor glorify God, and are without God. Christians are indeed obligated to glorify God, but in some respects they behave themselves worse than the heathen, for instead of glorifying God, they dishonor Him—yes, they mock with God in an intolerable manner. However, you may say, “How do they mock with God?” They do so by daily taking these words in their mouths: “Hallowed be Thy Name,” for they daily recite this prayer and are of the opinion that they would commit a great sin if they had not prayed this—if the *Lord’s Prayer* had not

been the conclusion of their prayer. However, in the meantime they have no knowledge of what this means: “Hallowed be Thy Name.” They do not desire this, nor are they motivated to pray this by reason of such a desire. It does not even occur to them, and they just rattle it off. Is not this mockery? Would you dare to address a king or a man of distinction in this manner? Do you think that he would give you your request upon such irreverent babbling? Acknowledge therefore what an abomination it is to be prattling in this manner in the presence of God, while yet being of the opinion that you had prayed to God. Such persons have no interest in the means whereby God’s Name is hallowed: the coming of God’s kingdom and the petitions which follow. Consequently, this means that they themselves also have no desire for the glorification of God’s Name, and yet they insist on daily reciting this petition ignorantly, doing so without a desire for the matter—and irreverently. Is this not to be guilty of mocking with the great God? It would be less sinful not to pray at all than to rattle something off mockingly in God’s presence.

The Grave Consequences of Not Hallowing God’s Name

Therefore, give ear, you ignorant ones, who neither have knowledge of God nor of the contents of this petition, and who have no desires relative to this petition; hear, you who rattle off your prayers, who pray routinely, who mock with God, who tear God’s laws to shreds and trample upon them, who abuse the holy name of God, who with your ungodly walk cause the name of God to be slandered; hear and take the following to heart:

First, God will not permit Himself to be mocked and despised. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Gal 6:7); “Surely He scorneth the scorners” (Prov 3:34). Oh, how dreadful it will be when you will thus be scorned!

Secondly, as long as you live in such a condition, God does not wish to be worshiped by you. “When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isa 1:12, 15). What a wretched condition it is not to be permitted to pray—yes, then even their religion is an abomination before God! “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord” (Prov 15:8). God even forbids them to speak of divine things: “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth” (Ps 50:16). Oh, God is so holy that we may not approach unto Him except in the way of holiness.

Thirdly, if we do not hallow God's Name; if we but say with our mouth, "Hallowed be Thy Name," while neither understanding what we are saying nor having a heartfelt desire that such would occur, then God will sanctify Himself by punishing you, in order that everyone would perceive how very much God ought to be feared and how reverent we ought to be in our approach unto Him. When Nadab and Abihu came before the Lord with *strange fire*, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them" (Lev 10:3). In response to this Moses said, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me" (Lev 10:3). Even though God does not always do this immediately, the Lord will nevertheless do this at His time and in His manner, and they will be aware of the fulfillment of this *threat*: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isa 29:13-14). Therefore, also give heed as to how you pray; be acquainted with and desirous for that which you declare before God: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God" (Eccles 5:2). This is intended for those who pray in an evil manner.

The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Use of This Petition

Also the godly are very deficient in praying this petition, and therefore are in need of rebuke. Many dwell too much upon themselves and are too intent upon a feeling sense of the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of their state, and victory over their sins, holiness, and virtuousness. The latter is a good desire, but it is not sufficient. We ought much more to accustom ourselves to have knowledge of, love for, and focus upon the highest goal in all things: the glorification of God's Name. This we must heartily supplicate for in our prayer, rather than desist in discouragement by saying, "I cannot glorify God; I am too ignorant and I do not know how to begin; I am too sinful, and the power of my corruptions troubles my soul; my cross presses me down and I am surrounded by sorrows; I find it difficult to believe that God is my God. How then can I glorify His Name? And even if I undertake this, then I must immediately desist. I am without subject matter for my prayer, I find no sweetness in it, and it is but the work of my intellect."

You are indeed to be rebuked. To refrain from this causes you to remain spiritually immature. You desire to immediately have a

view of the glory of God in a high measure, as well as having a feeling and vehement sense of love. Instead, you must begin in a humble condition of soul and reflect upon the suitableness of God being hallowed by all creatures, the blessedness of those who do so with desire and love, as well as your own desire to that end. You must thus train yourself continually to have this objective in view in order to become accustomed to it. In so doing, your propensity in this regard will improve.

Therefore, stir up your soul to hallow God's Name and to pray for this continually, for:

(1) God is worthy of this (Rev 4:11), and it behooves you (Isa 42:21).

(2) God is pleased with it (Ps 22:4), and this is all your delight (Ps 71:8).

(3) It is the delightful activity of the birds, the heavens (Ps 19:1), the angels (Isa 6:3), and the saints upon earth (Ps 92:2; Ps 69:31). Would you then be silent?

(4) this will cause your work to be more genuine (John 3:21), and is a great privilege for you (Ps 99:3, 6). God glorifies all who glorify Him (1 Sam 2:30), and it is the sweetest task (Ps 147:1). Yes, it is felicity itself and it will be the eternal activity of glory (Rev 5:9-12). Therefore, take pleasure in this, undertake it, take conscious notice of the manner in which God reveals His perfections, and praise the Lord. Begin with this objective and end in it. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6). These matters have been enlarged upon and recommended in chapter 56x Add this chapter to it for it belongs to it. If I had not dealt with it extensively there, I would have been obligated to do so here. Since, however, we did so at that time, I have said less of it here.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come

God has conjoined both the end and the means to obtain that end with an unbreakable bond. He who does not use the means should not expect to attain the end. This is common knowledge to everyone. Sometimes the means—such as heavy labor and perilous circumstances—are unattractive and we would not avail ourselves of them if it were not for the fact that we would thus attain the desired end. Sometimes the means in and of themselves are attractive. We would make use of them without any further objective in view—as is true for delectable food and drink. In the spiritual realm all is sweet—the end and the means which we use and avail ourselves of in order to attain the end (I am not referring to suffering here). They are sweet in view of the end to be attained, and they are inherently sweet as well. How amiable and desirable the ultimate of all objectives is—the hallowing of God’s Name—we have demonstrated in the preceding petition. The five subsequent petitions are the means to that end—each individual petition being very precious and giving cause for rejoicing to the truly spiritual person. The means which most preeminently promotes the glorification of God’s Name is the coming of God’s kingdom. Its nature, glory, advantages, and desirability we shall now explain.

In the *second* petition reference is made to a *kingdom*, relative to which the prayer is uttered that it might *come*.

The Word “Kingdom” Defined and Expounded

Let us consider the word “*kingdom*.” A kingdom consists of a

populace united under one leader. There have always been many kingdoms in the world, and it is still divided into many. Among them there have been four empires; that is, eras when the entire world was subjected to one ruling head. These are the empires of Babylon, of the Medes and Persians, of the Greeks, and of the Romans. There is yet a *fifth* empire of an entirely different nature: the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, of which we are now speaking. This is otherwise referred to as the congregation of God and of Christ, and we denominate it with a word not found in Scripture: the church.²⁶

Let us furthermore consider the word “*Thy*.” In this prayer God the Father is addressed, and thus the reference here is to the kingdom of the Father, for all things are out of Him and through Him. The Father gathers, rules, and preserves this kingdom by His Son Jesus Christ. This is therefore conjoined in the following passage: “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ” (Rev 12:10). God is King in and of Himself. He is the original cause of all things; He inherently has the preeminence, is exalted, has all majesty and glory, and all power and dominion from all eternity. This was true before there were any creatures, and now that creatures do exist, they are all subject to God in consequence of His nature. “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chron 29:11). The Lord is great—yes, He alone is King: “I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My name is dreadful among the heathen” (Mal 1:14).

The kingdom of God is distinguished between 1) the kingdom of His power, 2) the kingdom of His glory, and 3) the kingdom of His grace.

The kingdom of His power has all creatures as its subjects: good and evil angels, good and evil men, all living animals, and all inanimate objects in the heavens and upon earth. Everything is so fully in His hand that they cannot move without Him. Furthermore, they immediately stand ready at His bidding and execute His will. The Lord is therefore generally referred to in Scripture as *the Lord of hosts*. David speaks as follows: “They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants” (Ps 119:91); “The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all” (Ps 103:19). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this by saying, “Whose dominion is an everlasting

²⁶ This statement is only applicable to the Statenvertaling.

dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou” (Dan 4:34-35).

The kingdom of His glory has as its subjects the holy angels and the glorified elect in the *third* heaven—that is, paradise or the house of the Father. “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). “God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory” (1 Thess 2:12), that is, to His glorious kingdom.

The kingdom of His grace is also denominated as “the Church of God.” First, the subjects of this kingdom are all true believers and converted persons. “... the Lamb shall overcome them ... and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev 17:14).

Secondly, God separates them from the world, all nations, all communities, and all kingdoms, and causes them to dwell alone. “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Num 23:9); “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17).

Thirdly, there is a very intimate interrelationship among them—a most intimate and spiritual bond—so that together they form one whole. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). This union exists:

(1) As a result of true doctrine: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20); “One Lord, one faith” (Eph 4:5). The apostle therefore exhorts: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house” (2 John 1:10).

(2) Due to being united by the same Spirit who dwells in all of them and by whom they all live: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14); “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2:18).

(3) By love: “Their hearts ... being knit together in love” (Col 2:2); “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

(4) By that selfsame faith, by which they are united to Christ and in Christ to each other. “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (John 17:21).

Fourthly, this kingdom has the Lord Jesus as its King. “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Ps 2:6). Even though only true believers are the actual subjects of this King—they being

God, knowledge the only members who truly constitute the church, being united to the Lord Jesus with a spiritual bond, and in Him to each other—the Lord Jesus is nevertheless King of the entire church as she manifests herself in the world, which includes many unconverted members. Just as an earthly king rules over strangers, residents, hidden enemies, and traitors, likewise Christ also rules over the unconverted in His kingdom. For they acknowledge Him to be their King, subject themselves to Him, have sworn allegiance to Him, and confess Him, even though they do it but in an external sense and with an unchanged heart. Kingdom of God, church

Fifthly, God designates this kingdom as the object of His goodness and all manner of blessings. In that kingdom:

(1) God dwells with His gracious presence: “God is in the midst of her” (Ps 46:5); “In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion” (Ps 76:2). Jesus is their King “who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Rev 2:1).

(2) There is safety: “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3); “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her” (Zech 2:5). Therefore all who know the Lord take refuge there: “The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it” (Isa 14:32).

(3) There is light: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ... but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa 60:1-3).

(4) There is spirituality, life, and holiness. “But ye are ... an holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9).

(5) There is peace and joy: “For the kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17).

(6) There is comfort and refreshment for an oppressed soul: “All My springs are in Thee” (Ps 87:7).

(7) The elect are converted and are gathered in: “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her” (Ps 87:5); “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Such glorious things are said of the city of God—of the kingdom of Christ.

The Origin and Nature of the Kingdom

This kingdom has its origin in the *first* gospel declaration to Adam, and will continue without fail until the end of the world. From Adam to Abraham it was gathered from various nations, but

the particular focus was upon the holy lineage. From Abraham to Christ it consisted in the seed of Abraham, although many other individuals joined themselves to it. “He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Ps 147:19-20). After the coming of Christ, all distinction among nations has been removed, and whoever believes in and fears the Lord is pleasing to Him, regardless of what nation he belongs to. “Thou ... hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9).

This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, being denominated as such in contrast to all earthly kingdoms. “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). It originates in heaven, is of a heavenly nature, functions in a heavenly manner, and culminates in heaven. It is therefore called the kingdom of heaven. Since this kingdom has always been the same, being identical in nature from Adam to Christ, it thus has been in all ages a heavenly kingdom. However, it is especially the New Testament church which is denominated as such, all the externals of the shadow ministry of the Old Testament having been removed. The church is presently not an external kingdom; that is, it is not governed by kings and princes and furnished with external weapons—as was true in the Old Testament. Instead, she is now fully and entirely removed from all earthly externals, and is only heavenly in nature—also in its external manifestation. Thus, the church of the New Testament is in a special sense the *kingdom of heaven*. John the Baptist denominates it as such: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2). The Lord Jesus generally denominates it as such in the gospels and requires His apostles to do likewise. “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 10:7).

It is a kingdom by virtue of its being ruled by a king, namely, Jesus Christ, who gathers, protects, and governs this kingdom. We refer to it as the kingdom of heaven since:

(1) It has its origin in heaven and is therefore frequently denominated the kingdom of God. By means of the gospel God reveals the Mediator and the way to salvation. God converts and adds to the church those regarding whom it pleases Him to do so. He sends forth ministers to that end, and the gospel call is therefore referred to as a heavenly calling. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1).

(2) Its subjects have heavenly natures. “Which were born ... of God” (John 1:13), are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4),

“... are led by the Spirit of God” (Rom 8:14), and “are spiritual” (Gal 6:1).

(3) The benefits of this kingdom are heavenly: God Himself is their portion (Lam 3:24), and the Lord Jesus is their “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). All the benefits of the covenant of grace are theirs. They are “the heirs of promise” (Heb 6:17).

(4) The activity of its subjects is of a heavenly nature: they pray, believe, love, and exercise virtue.

(5) They are without carnal weapons and are defenseless, even though the entire world is at enmity with them. Their battle is of a spiritual nature, however, and their weapons are spiritual. The apostle describes this armor from head to toe in Eph 6:13-18. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Cor 10:4).

(6) It culminates in heaven: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet 1:9); “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet 5:4). These are all the reasons why this kingdom is denominated the kingdom of heaven.

This Kingdom Redounds to the Glorification of God

The existence of this kingdom redounds to the glorification of God in consequence of what God works in its subjects, what God does relative to them, and by what the church does relative to God.

(1) God’s perfections shine forth in the ingathering of the church and the conversion of souls solely by the instrumentality of the Word; in the uniting of believers to Christ, justifying them by His ransom and righteousness; and by sanctifying, leading, and comforting them. In all this God reveals His wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, and faithfulness. He is thus “glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess 1:10).

(2) God is also glorified by what He does relative to His church. When He chastises the church for her sins, then God’s holiness is manifested as not being able to endure sin even in His children and thus visits them with the rod. He is glorified when He preserves His church in the midst of wolves, so that she remains standing in all the assaults of the enemy—assaults which, humanly speaking, could easily undo her. He is glorified when He causes the church to be manifest again in a glorious fashion after having been in very humble circumstances. God thus reveals in all this His omnipotence and faithfulness, showing that they are His people

and that He will avenge Himself upon the oppressors of the church (2 Thess 1:6-7).

(3) God is also glorified by the church when she, with her deeds, shows “forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9). “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise” (Isa 43:21). Thus, this kingdom is the preeminent means whereby God’s Name is hallowed. The Lord Jesus therefore teaches us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

It is relative to this kingdom that we pray that it *may come*.

Question When does this kingdom come? The kingdom of heaven, as far as its New Testament manifestation is concerned, had not yet come at the time when the Lord Jesus prescribed this prayer, for the Lord Jesus had neither paid the ransom nor had yet been glorified. The Holy Spirit had not as yet been poured out in that extraordinary manner and the gospel had not yet been conveyed to the heathen, even though that moment was near. They could thus pray that it would come; it did not exist as yet, but was near. However, how can we now pray that such would come about, since all this has transpired?

Answer: Even though this great change initially took place, its progression occurs daily, and will not cease to occur until the Lord Jesus returns for judgment. When we therefore presently pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” then this pertains to individuals in particular and to the condition of the church in general.

This Petition as It Relates to Individuals

This petition pertains to individual persons. As a house is built by adding stone to stone, and as a kingdom exists and is enlarged by uniting more and more subjects, likewise this kingdom prospers by the translation of individuals from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. This takes place when God, by means of the Word of the kingdom, illuminates their understanding. He will thereby cause them to see, while being inwardly stirred, their sinful and damnable condition, the way of salvation, and the preciousness of the state of the redeemed. This kingdom comes when God removes their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh; when He gives them a submissive, attentive, and pliable heart; when He grants them faith whereby they accept Christ as their righteousness and ransom; when He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, adding them as living stones to this spiritual building and incorporating them as faithful subjects into this heavenly kingdom.

And, the more they increase in light and holiness, the more God's kingdom is within them.

This Petition as It Relates to the Church in Its Condition

This kingdom comes relative to the condition of the church in general.

(1) This kingdom comes when the light emanated by the church is pure and holy; when she eliminates the foul odor of error and heresy; when she excels in holiness, and she "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song 6:10); when she glitters with "beauties of holiness" (Ps 110:3), which "becometh thine house" (Ps 93:5), and when she is thus "a praise in the earth" (Isa 62:7) and "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa 62:3). This kingdom comes when the church radiates such glory that others do not dare to join her and magnify her instead (Acts 5:13).

(2) This kingdom comes when the church is multiplied and when multitudes join her in those localities where the church exists. It furthermore comes when the gospel is brought to other locales, nations, and kingdoms, and when the gospel is readily received there according to the promise: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt 24:14).

(3) This kingdom comes when the Lord delivers the church from overwhelming oppression which had caused her to flee into the wilderness, and when He causes her to reappear more gloriously. Such was the case when the Lord, at the time of Constantine the Great, delivered the church from the persecution of the heathen emperors; and when He delivered her from the oppression of the antichrist at the time of the Reformation. It will come when God will destroy the throne of the beast, Rome, and annihilate the pope of Rome. For as the antichrist is reduced, the church will proportionally increase.

(4) This kingdom will come when the Jews will come to the Messiah, Jesus Christ; when they will acknowledge Him, believe in Him, repent toward the Lord, unite themselves with believers among the Gentiles, and together will form one church. This will be according to the promise found in Rom 11:25-26: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn

away ungodliness from Jacob”; “What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead” (Rom 11:15).

(5) This kingdom will come when that which is recorded in Rev 20:2, 4 will come to pass: “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” The glory of the church during the millennium will consist in the annihilation of the antichrist and the Mohammedans—the two chief enemies of the church; the binding of Satan and his incarceration in hell; the conversion of the Jews; the manifestation of great zeal among the heathen and all manner of nations; the presence of extraordinary light, holiness, and peace; the extraordinary indwelling of God among them; and a wondrous revelation of the Lord Jesus as King—not physically, but in the Spirit. God will then also make the earth extraordinarily fruitful. Oh, what a glorious time that will be! Who does not long for this time? All these things constitute the coming of God’s kingdom.

The Lord Jesus mandates that we must pray for the coming of this kingdom. Such was the practice of the Old Testament saints: “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually” (Ps 72:15). This pertains to the kingdom of which Messiah is King—and thus the church—which is the spiritual body of Christ, “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). For the King’s honor is in the multitude of people. No matter what David’s perplexities were, the church was always bound upon his heart. He could not conclude his prayer for deliverance unless there was also a sigh for Zion: “Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem” (Ps 51:18); “Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles” (Ps 25:22). He exhorts everyone to do likewise: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (Ps 122:6).

Our Duty to Pray This Petition

It is thus also our duty to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” This includes: Let Thy church radiate light and holiness; extend her to all nations; deliver her from her oppression and anguish; annihilate the antichrist and all the enemies of the church; convert the Jews; and let the promised, glorious state of the church come about.

Furthermore, bless all the means which are subservient to the growth of the church:

(1) Send forth faithful and capable servants, established in the truth, who are zealous and apt to teach: “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His

harvest” (Matt 9:38); that is, such as the Lord has promised: “I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness” (Isa 60:17).

(2) Let the Word and its preaching be blessed and fruitful: “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you” (2 Thess 3:1); “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Col 4:3).

(3) Let the institutions for learning—for the children as well as for the sons of the prophets—be blessed. Let the nurture of children be blessed so that the families become little churches. “And, ye fathers ... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).

(4) Grant us a good government which, according to promise, will seek the welfare of the church: “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers” (Isa 49:23).

The Requisites for Praying This Petition Aright

In order to pray rightly for the coming of this kingdom there must be:

(1) *knowledge* of what constitutes the future and glory of this kingdom; how this petition relates to the *first* petition; or, how God’s Name is hallowed by the coming of this kingdom—both of which have been demonstrated above;

(2) *love* for the well-being of the church;

(3) an *acknowledgment* of the impotence of individuals to repent, to add themselves as a living member to the church, to live as members who bring glory to the church, as well as the impotence of the church in general to gather herself, remain intact, maintain purity in doctrine and sanctification, enlarge herself, and persevere during persecutions;

(4) *faith* that only God can do this, is willing to do it, has done so prior to this moment and still does, and has promised to hear the prayers of His children in this respect—and will also do this in the future according to His promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). All this constitutes the contents of this prayer.

The Vain and Sacrilegious Use of This Petition

How few are they who pray this petition in truth, and how many are they who rattle it off! They think that to neglect praying the Lord’s Prayer every day is ungodly; however, they have no qualms as to whether this petition is prayed aright.

First, this is true for all those who neither know nor cherish this

kingdom in its spiritual, glorious, and beneficial nature, and who neither honor nor fear its King. And yet they say, “Thy kingdom come.”

Secondly, there are those who do not manifest themselves as true members, but as subjects of the kingdom of Satan, as ungodly, worldly-minded. They are nothing but blots upon the church and a disgrace to her. And yet they pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

Thirdly, there are those who are of the opinion that the well-being of the church consists in the quantity of members and the presence of peace—even if the church is in an ignorant and sinful condition. They—ministers, elders, deacons, common members, or authorities—will do nothing for the upbuilding of the church, and do not concern themselves with whether it goes well or ill with the church. They allow everything to proceed as if it did not pertain to them and nevertheless they pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

Fourthly, there are those who hate, oppress, and persecute the faithful subjects of this kingdom—those who have received light and are godly. If someone comes forward who opposes errors, ungodliness, and the oppression of the saints and desires to seek the good of Jerusalem, he will have to fear that in all things he will be opposed with a bitter hatred. Nevertheless they pray “Thy kingdom come.”

First of all, this is mockery with God. By reciting this petition they are declaring that they are praying to God that He do such a thing, expressly requesting Him to do so. In the meantime, however, they do not know what they are saying, and they request what they do not desire; on the contrary, they work against it. Do you think that God will permit Himself to be mocked?

Secondly, to hate, contend with, oppose, and oppress the church is to contend with the Lord Jesus, the King of the church Himself. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:4-5).

Thirdly, not only are you no partaker of all the heavenly benefits of the church—and thus you will also not be glorified with her—but all manner of dreadful judgments will come upon you: “But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me” (Luke 19:27); “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye” (Zech 2:8). Take note of the judgment which is threatened upon the oppressors of the church: “And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed” (Rev 11:5). When those who rattle off this petition—thus those who mock with God, are blots upon the church, cause the church to be slandered by their

walk, and are the oppressors of the church—will come to judgment and observe the church standing in glory at the right hand of Christ; when they will observe that the Lord Jesus Himself, the King of the church, is the Judge and will look upon them in wrath; oh, how will they then be terrified and tremble! If they were then permitted to render Christ a service, how readily they would do so! They will not be deemed worthy of this, however, but will be cast into the fire.

Obligations in This Petition

However, for you who have some esteem for the Lord Jesus and His kingdom, there are several obligations incumbent upon you.

First, *unite yourself to this kingdom* and place yourself under the banner of King Jesus. Be as a champion among champions in contending for this kingdom and against its enemies. For outside of this kingdom there is nothing but enemy territory. Do you wish to sojourn in the territory of the enemy? There are but two kingdoms—that of the Lord Jesus and that of the devil; there is no *third*. To be part of the kingdom of the devil, however, so that he has dominion over you as he does over all children of disobedience (Eph 2:2), is indeed the most despicable and abominable thing imaginable. For it is to be at enmity against the Lord Jesus and at war with His kingdom. It is the most extreme form of slavery, for it is to be under the dominion of sin, and it is a most dreadful thing, for it will end in eternal damnation. Therefore, depart from it with utmost urgency and enter into the kingdom of the omnipotent, faithful, good, and blessed King Jesus. There you will find safety, peace, reconciliation with God, light, holiness, and comfort, and it will culminate in the kingdom of eternal glory. Therefore, depart and make a transfer, and join in honoring of Christ and the hallowing of God's Name.

Secondly, *cherish this kingdom*, and continually stir up your love to that end. Declare with your entire heart: "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee"; that is, I cannot make any contribution toward Thee, but I can do so "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight" (Ps 16:3). Have a heart for the church as David did: "They shall prosper that love thee. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good" (Ps 122:6, 8-9). Let love prompt you to say with Israel, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem

above my chief joy” (Ps 137:5-6). If your heart is capable of love, it must love the church, for God loves her. “But because the Lord loved you” (Deut 7:8); “Thou shalt be called Hephzibah ... for the Lord delighteth in thee” (Isa 62:7). The Lord Jesus has a heartfelt love for her. “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25). The angels love her and all believers love her. She is most delightful from every perspective, for they are the elect, the children of God, the saints, and the excellent. The church is “a crown of glory” (Isa 62:7), “a praise in the earth” (Isa 62:7), and “the perfection of beauty” (Ps 50:2). Therefore, love the church.

Thirdly, let both *the well-being and the degenerate condition of the church* be a matter of concern for you. Attentively inquire how the church in general is faring throughout the entire world. If you are informed that she is oppressed in certain places, that errors are surfacing and beginning to overwhelm her, that love is growing cold, that a worldly attitude is beginning to manifest itself, and that religious weeds are beginning to obscure the appearance of the church, then grieve over this and grieve “for the affliction of Joseph” (Amos 6:6). This is what Nehemiah did in chapter 1 and in chapter 2:3: “Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city (Jerusalem, the city of God), lieth waste?” From Lamentations it can be observed how deeply Jeremiah—and with him all the lovers of Zion—grieved over the oppression of the church. How do both he and the church lament there! “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted *me* in the day of His fierce anger” (Lam 1:12).

Furthermore, if you hear that the Lord here and there causes His church to lift up her head again, and visits His people with blessings, rejoice in this and thank the Lord for it. The church did this formerly: “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them” (Ps 126:1-2); “O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me” (Isa 12:1); “O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard ... we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Ps 66:12).

Fourthly, *pray and work for this kingdom*. Even though it is not in man’s power to extend, preserve, and sanctify this kingdom, this being God’s doing, it is nevertheless His will that man, out of love, be motivated to promote its well-being, and to call upon God to that

end: “Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach” (Joel 2:17); “O send out Thy light and Thy truth” (Ps 43:3); “Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion” (Ps 51:18).

The Duty of the Upright

He who prays in his heart, will and must actively promote the well-being of the church and strive to be a means in God’s hand—each in his place and according to his abilities.

(1) *Ministers* (the builders), in the demonstration of the Spirit and power, must preach the gospel from heart to heart, clearly and distinctly applying it individually to the ungodly, the godly, the weak, and the strong. They must convict, threaten, rebuke, comfort, and speak according to everyone’s condition, doing so publicly as well as in the homes. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim 4:2); “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:16).

(2) *Elders* must not only pray, “Thy kingdom come,” but out of love for this cause must actively engage themselves, give heed to how the congregation functions, rebuke those who are disorderly, instruct the ignorant, and visit the sick. Furthermore, all that is a minister’s duty in the private realm, is also their duty. Likewise the deacons must labor in their sphere.

(3) All individual members must not only continually persevere in praying for the well-being of the church, but also be active in their individual positions. It must be their objective to render the church glorious, separating themselves from all who are outside of her in order that the distinction be all the more visible. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor 6:17). Everyone must endeavor to be an example to others. That which was Timothy’s duty is applicable to every member of the church: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). Maintain mutual peace (except if the truth and godliness be at stake), and “seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps 34:14). Manifest a loving heart toward those who are within and without—to the one with the love of delight and toward the other with a compassionate love: “And (add) to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Pet 1:7). Be your brother’s keeper by instructing, exhorting, and comforting everyone—each according to his own circumstances—so that no one may backslide, but that all would unitedly go forward from strength to strength.

“... warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thess 5:14). How the church would radiate the beauties of holiness and render Christ honor if everyone were to behave himself in this fashion!

Even though the work inherently is sufficiently rewarding, doing something for God and His church being the most glorious and sweetest task, let the following reasons also stir you up:

(1) God is extraordinarily pleased with this. “Them that honour me I will honour” (1 Sam 2:30).

(2) The Lord will preserve such in the day of evil: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble” (Ps 41:1); “Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek 9:4).

(3) Such will experience that they themselves will greatly increase in gifts and graces: “Every branch in Me ... beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2); “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance” (Matt 13:12).

(4) Such a congregation will be richly blessed, “for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Ps 133:3).

(5) The Lord will abundantly reward such faithful ones. “Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought” (Mal 1:10); “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Matt 24:46). Oh, how sweet it will be to be able to say, “Behold, here am I and the children which the Lord has given me.” To them the Lord shall say: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt 25:21). Happy is that people that is in such a case!

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

The Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it Is in Heaven

The eternal and only blessed God, out of sovereign goodness, has created heaven and earth and all their hosts. He preserves them in their essence and motions by His omnipotent, omniscient (as far as each creature is concerned), efficacious, and all-encompassing influence. “Who ... upholding all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3); “By Him all things consist” (Col 1:17). Furthermore, He is also the lawgiver of His rational creatures—men: “For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver” (Isa 33:22).

Among all creatures upon earth, only man knows God as Creator, preserver, ruler, and lawgiver. When man was still in the state of rectitude, he joyously acknowledged the majesty, supremacy, and other perfections of the Lord. He beheld these perfections by reason of the immediate revelation of God to the soul, as well as by observing the creatures and God’s operations in them. He was conscious of his dependency upon His Maker, submitted himself to Him as lawgiver, and with a joyful willingness did everything the Lord required from him. He knew of no other will but the Lord’s will, for His law was imprinted in his nature—not only as a rule, but it was natural to him, he being a law unto himself.

However, after the fall everything in man has been reversed and corrupted. Even though he may be conscious and knowledgeable of his obligations toward God, he nevertheless separates himself from God, rejects the law of his Lord, lives according to his own rule, allows himself to be guided by his lusts, and declares himself to be his own master. By his very conduct he declares: “Who is the

Lord, that I should obey His voice ... I know not the Lord” (Exod 5:2); “Who is Lord over us” (Ps 12:4).

When God converts a person, however, his own will is most burdensome and grievous to himself. He hates it, strives against it, and would extract it by its very root if he were able to. He loves the will of God, and to do this will would be all his desire and delight. Yes, since he loves God, it is his desire that not only he, but that all men would acknowledge, honor, and fear God in His majesty and sovereign rule, and be obedient to Him. Since he knows that both he and all other men are unworthy, impotent, and incapable of this, and that such obedience is a gracious gift of God, he therefore avails himself of prayer and prays in humility, “Thy will be done,” doing so in accordance with what the Lord Jesus has prescribed *in the third petition*.

This petition consists of two parts. First, there is the matter requested: “Thy will be done.” *Secondly*, there is the manner in which this will is to be done: “On earth as it is in heaven.”

The Subject of this Petition: The Revealed Will of God

Relative to the matter requested, there is 1) the subject: *Thy will*; and 2) the activity requested: *be done*.

The address “*Our Father*,” *etc.* is applicable to all petitions. The supplicant here maintains his childlike disposition and makes use of a childlike boldness to make his desire known to God as being His Father in Christ, and requesting its fulfillment. He does this, taking the lowest place, in deepest humility, and with the deepest reverence for the eminence and awe-inspiring nature of the divine majesty. While being in such a frame, the supplicant will perceive at once that his request will not attribute anything to the Lord Himself. Rather, he perceives it to be a gracious gift to man that he is permitted to behold and delight in the majesty of his God and His worthiness to be obeyed; that he is privileged to submit to Him and with joyful willingness may do that which is pleasing to Him, thus executing His will and commandments with zeal and steadfastness. He therefore requests this in such a heartfelt manner.

In regard to man, his will is a faculty of the soul which enables him to love or to hate, to be either pleased or displeased, to choose or reject—all this in accordance with the manner in which the intellect views or judges a given matter as being desirable or undesirable. However, this is not true of the *will* of God. We puny human beings speak of it in human terms and are to understand it in a divine sense. We are acquainted with the matter as such, but for the “how” of this truth we must close our eyes; it is incomprehensible. We know

that the will of God is the willing God Himself, and this is therefore not the matter to which our petition relates here.

When we speak here of the will of God, we perceive this will as it relates to the creature. As such, it signifies that which pleases God—God’s good pleasure: “... according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5). It can be that God Himself executes this: “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Ps 115:3), or that He requires this to be done by man: “... doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph 6:6).

God wills the execution of those things which He has purposed in His eternal counsel and which He has not made known to man in advance. This is denominated *the will of His decree*, or *His secret will*. We read of this will in the following passages: “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa 46:10); “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God” (Deut 29:29). Even though this is not the actual subject of this petition, man is nevertheless involved with it.

Rather, the actual reference here is to those things which God has revealed to us, and not solely to those matters in which God finds pleasure, such as are recorded in the following passages: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3); “In these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jer 9:24). It particularly relates to the activity of men, however, which they engage in, due to it being the will of God: “Lo, I come ... to do Thy will” (Heb 10:7); “... doing the will of God” (Eph 6:6). This will is denominated: *the revealed will of God*, or *the will of His command*. “Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29). This revealed will pertains to matters which God reveals in advance, but as yet have to come to pass. Such is true of the prophecies and the Revelation of John. Or else it refers to God’s commands, the moral law, and thus to that which God requires from man. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly” (Mic 6:8); “... but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt 7:21). So much for the subject of this petition.

It is this will concerning which the supplicant prays that it “be done,” that is, that it be performed. Here the supplicant does not primarily and foremost focus upon man and his happiness and felicity in respect to holiness—as consisting in the harmony of his intellect, will, words, and deeds with the revealed will of God. Rather, the supplicant is moved by the glorification of God in His majesty. This is realized when man submits himself to God, and

when he lives according to God's will. He is moved to pray for this by his desire that God be acknowledged by men as He is, and as He manifests Himself in the works of nature and grace. For man by nature does not perceive this, does not exalt God above all, nor does he glorify Him; he is furthermore not able to do this. He therefore prays that God would convert men, draw them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and translate them into the kingdom of His Son, so that they will be rendered capable of doing His will and be desirous to do it in very deed.

God creates His secret will, the will of His decree, irresistibly. This is thus not the matter we petition to be done. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back" (Isa 14:27). This sovereignty of the Lord the supplicant acknowledges, and he exalts and honors Him as such. Nebuchadnezzar did so: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Dan 4:35). Even though we are not praying that this will be done, we nevertheless acknowledge this will, acquiesce in it, and fully submit to it, while confessing: "Be it with me according to the Lord's good pleasure; let Him do with me as pleases Him; I do not wish the Lord's sovereign rule over me to be restricted by whether or not this pleases me. I am but clay, and let Him make, break, or shape me according to His good pleasure. 'For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: ... and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth' (Job 23:14, 13). Let Him do this and let Him be sovereign in doing so!"

The revealed will of God—that is, the will of His command, the manner in which we are to conduct ourselves in all respects and under all circumstances—is the subject of our prayer. This does not pertain to the will of His command as it relates to God Himself, but as it relates to man. Thus, the petition is that man would do that which God wishes to command, doing so for the very reason that God commands it and is pleased with man for doing so—for we observe daily that man does not do what God commands. Yes, he prays this due to being acquainted with man's wickedness, his own impotence, as well as with the fact that no one will, or is able to, obey God's commandment (and thus acknowledge God's majesty and rule) except God illuminates the understanding, changes the heart, and causes us to walk according to His institutions and to keep and observe His judgments. The Lord promises to do this in Ezek 36:26-27, as well as in Jer 31:33: "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their

hearts.” Therefore the supplicant prays that God would manifest His omnipotence and goodness by granting the supplicant and others such a heart to know, love, fear, and obey Him in order that man would thereby show that God is the sole Lord, ruler, and lawgiver, who by His very nature obligates all creatures to obedience. David exemplifies this for us when he prays, “Teach me Thy statutes” (Ps 119:36); “Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts” (Ps 119:36); “Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies” (Ps 119:36); “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments” (Ps 119:35).

We are to emulate him in this, and thereby demonstrate our desire for the glorification of God’s Name by the doing of His will, acknowledging our impotence due to the foolishness and wickedness of our heart. Moreover, we must thereby acknowledge that God is good in being willing to give this, has the ability to give it, and is faithful to fulfil His promises to the supplicant. So much for the *first* portion—that is, the matter requested.

The Manner in Which God’s Will is to Be Done

The second part of the petition relates to the manner in which we are to be willing to do God’s will: “On earth as it is in heaven.” It is neither contrary to the text, nor to the matter itself to acknowledge here a contrast between heaven and earth, or rather, a oneness of heaven and earth. Thus the petition is: “Thy will not only be done in heaven as the angels and the souls of the just made perfect glorify Thee there by doing Thy will, but let also Thy will be done by men upon earth. May Thy Name thus be glorified in heaven as well as upon earth, and upon earth as well as in heaven. The devil and the reprobate upon earth are not deemed worthy by Thee of this, as they neither desire this nor will ever do so. However, Thou hast formed a people for Thyself in order that they would show forth Thy praise. Therefore, let Thy elect do so both in heaven—which they do and about which Thy children upon earth rejoice—and upon earth in Thy church, which is so imperfect and in order to do so is in need of a greater measure of grace and of the Spirit. Illuminate and sanctify them more and more in order that they may be equipped to do Thy will, and thus glorify Thy Name and that thus Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” From this perspective all the elect are viewed as one congregation who all join together in glorifying God by doing His good pleasure. Observe the unity of the residents of heaven and the congregation upon earth: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the *firstborn*, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant” (Heb 12:22-24). They are one people who rejoice in each other’s activity; that is, in their mutual glorification of God.

However, the comparison between heaven and earth can also be understood as referring to the manner in which the will of God is to be done—namely, that men upon earth do the will of God as heartily, eagerly, earnestly, joyously, and continually as the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven. It is not suggested here that it is done as perfectly. A believer indeed strongly desires this, strives for this, and will not rest until his obedience will be perfect. However, he does not desire to limit the Holy One of Israel. It is a gracious gift to be privileged and be able to do the will of God, and one is therefore grateful for the smallest measure of this, even though he longs for more. He does not dare to put restrictions on the measure, however, knowing that God will not make His children perfect here. Rather, it is His will to lead His children to perfection and felicity by faith in the Mediator who is given unto daily justification and sanctification. Therefore, this is not prayed in the absolute sense of the word and with the designation that perfection be attained in the present time. Rather, one joins the citizens of heaven in their endeavor and is desirous to emulate them in their zeal, desire, and love—praying therefore that he may have both grace and the Spirit to that end.

(1) The residents of heaven do the will of God with an unfathomable willingness. “Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Ps 103:20). This is also the desire of true worshipers, and they endeavor to be thus engaged. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power” (Ps 110:3).

(2) In heaven the most sacred *reverence* and deepest humility is manifested in the presence of the Lord. The angels cover their faces when they declare the holiness and glory of God (Isa 6:2). The twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne and fall down before Him who sat upon the throne (Rev 4:10). Likewise every believer desires to do the will of God in a very meek and humble disposition. God wills that it be so: “What doth the Lord require of thee, but ... to walk humbly with thy God” (Mic 6:8). Such was David’s practice: “In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple” (Ps 5:7).

(3) The residents of heaven do God’s will diligently and zealously:

“Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire” (Ps 104:4). The Lord also wills that His children upon earth do His will zealously: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11).

(4) In heaven there is nothing but joy. All that they do they do with an inexpressible joy. God wills that also upon earth His children likewise do His will with joy. “Serve the Lord with gladness” (Ps 100:2). This is also their desire: “It is joy to the just to do judgment” (Prov 21:15).

(5) In heaven they never become weary, but they are always and steadfastly doing God’s will: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night” (Rev 7:15). Likewise, God wills that His people upon earth also be steadfast in the doing of His will. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

The petition therefore is that we may do the will of God as willingly, humbly, diligently, zealously, joyously, and steadfastly as the residents of heaven do, even though we shall not attain their perfection until we shall join them in glory.

From the nature of this petition, as declared above, everyone will be able to be convinced whether or nor he prays this petition aright.

The Vain Recitation of This Petition

Many recite this petition daily; however, it is nothing more than a recital and thus not a prayer.

(1) This is true for all who are not acquainted with the Lord’s majesty and worthiness to be obeyed, whereby all men—and particularly each of you individually—are obligated to submit to His will. They neither acknowledge nor love this will with inner approbation. They neither submit themselves to the Lord, offer their services to Him, nor willingly do His will, so that in all this they might glorify His Name, acknowledge Him as the only God, and exalt, magnify, and praise Him. You who are convinced that such is your disposition, what business do you have to pray and to say to God, “Thy will be done”? For you are neither sincere in this, nor desire this, nor are desirous to do so. It is therefore no more than a rattling off of this petition in the presence of the majestic, omniscient, and holy God. How do you dare! Do you not fear to be cast into hell with one blow?

(2) This is true for you who set God aside, let Him be for what He is, remove yourself far from Him, and live according to your own will, “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3); “... that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12); “... serving

divers lusts and pleasures” (Titus 3:3). You are a person who allows your own will to be the law and motive for your doings, declaring, “I will do this and I will not do that; period! Who has any say over me, and of whom do I need counsel? To whom do I need to give an account of my doings? It pleases me to conduct myself in this manner.” No matter what God commands, you will not do it. If God forbids something, you refuse to desist, for your will must be done. Nevertheless you rattle off before God, “Thy will be done.”

(3) Some are not even satisfied with doing their own will. Rather, they insist that all men and beasts—and if they dared to say it, also God—would stand ready to do their will. Any person who does not fulfil their wishes and does not behave according to their will, can expect to be penalized by them in as cruel a manner as possible. And if they were capable, they would cause everyone to do their will. They do whatever they are capable of, however, by showing aversion, hatred, wrath, vengefulness, and by verbal abuse and the infliction of injury. Even though they insist that others do their will, they nevertheless say to God, “Thy will be done.” Attentively take note of these convicting remarks.

First, you who are such, and in such a frame pray, “Thy will be done” (which however is no prayer), ought indeed to be inwardly convinced that you are mocking with God. How do you dare to rattle something off before the most eminent and awe-inspiring Majesty, saying something to Him which you do not mean and will not do, whereas you intend, and actually do the very opposite! If you dare to proceed with mocking God, you will experience that “God is not mocked” (Gal 6:7). Surely, God will mock with you when He will cast you away from Himself. “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Prov 1:26); “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov 28:9).

Secondly, you nevertheless wish to be known as a Christian and would be offended if people called you a heathen or an atheist—which those being referred to above truly are. Be assured that you are neither a partaker of Christ, nor of the benefits of the covenant of grace, for “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Those who are Christ’s have yet remaining lusts which surface daily. However, these lusts are subdued, controlled, and opposed in order that they may be rooted out. Such persons hate their own will and grieve when it manifests itself. On the contrary, it is your pleasure, delight, and your very activity to do your will. You are therefore without Christ, without God, and without hope. Will you then yet proceed in this way with delight?

Thirdly, you who live, as has been said, according to your own will, and then still say, “Thy will be done,” are not only mocking with God and are without Christ and without hope, but eternal condemnation hangs above your head; eternal damnation will be your end. Hear what God says concerning you and to you: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13)—not only temporal death which all men have in common, but also eternal death, that is, damnation. “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil 3:19). And do you ask what eternal damnation is? Consider 2 Thess 1:8-9, where we read, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” The apostle speaks likewise to you: “But unto them that ... do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish” (Rom 2:8-9). Consider also other texts in which eternal damnation is described. Question your own conscience and give heed if it will not cause you to perceive all this in some measure so that you may be alarmed by it. Therefore, do not go on in this way; either desist from praying, or pray this petition reverently in the presence of God, earnestly desiring and humbly requesting the same.

The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted

The godly do indeed have light, life, and truth within themselves. It is all still so feeble, however, and the residual corruption of nature still has so much strength. They have to strive against the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul. Even though their own will does not have dominion over them, it nevertheless frequently manifests itself, and readily meddles with all things. Frequently they are also not conscious of their own will, do not detect it quickly enough, and do not strive against it sufficiently. Too often they are too irreverent and careless when they pray, “Thy will be done,” for the perfect intention to turn from and strive against their own will is not present in an express and lively sense. They must therefore humble themselves about their deficient prayers, seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ, pray for strength to oppose their own will, and henceforth be more earnest in denouncing their own will. With a sincere intent they must strive against their own will and come to God, saying, “Thy will be done.”

Therefore renounce your own will; that is, treat it as a stranger whom you do not know. Do not consult it, esteem it as your enemy,

hate it, reject it, thrust it away from you, and do not heed it—however delightful and flattering it may be—for everything would be defiled if your will would but find residence in your smallest finger. Therefore, renounce your own will.

For, first of all, what are you—you, who are but a worm and an insignificant, vain, sinful, and hateful monstrosity, that you should have a will which is contrary to the will of God, who is your Lord, lawgiver, and Judge? Who are you that your own will would be to you as a lord, law, and rule—yes, that you insist upon others also conforming to your will? Something more unbecoming, despicable, and contemptible is not imaginable. Abhor yourself, be ashamed, and hide yourself so that neither God, angels, nor men will see you. Do you dare to maintain your own will in opposition to the holy will of the sovereign God? Shame on you! Hasten to thrust out and mortify your will, for this is not becoming to one who is but an ant and a monstrosity; it is intolerable. I cannot find the words to give expression to the hateful and intolerable nature of all this. Hasten to thrust your own will from you as far as possible.

Secondly, what is it that your own will desires? Does it desire something which is beautiful, glorious, honest, and beneficial? No, but it desires that which is impure, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It desires to be honored by a worm—yes, by one who is bound for hell—and thus you desire to be loved by those who are hateful. Your desires relate to a splendid piece of real estate, that which is vanity, things which perish, things which pollute the soul, and things which at best are of no benefit. They are things which are prohibited by God, and will lead soul and body to hell. Will these things be more glorious and delightful to you than God, His will, and the things in which God delights? Shall your will be in direct opposition to the will of God? If God says, “I hate these things, and you will neither desire, seek, nor focus upon them,” will you then say, “I wish to covet, seek, and have them”? Will that which is inferior prevail over that which is superior; that which is defiled over that which is holy; and that which is harmful over that which is beneficial? Therefore, renounce your own will if you wish to pray, “Thy will be done.”

Thirdly, believing supplicants, you have certainly not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God. Doesn't this Spirit compel you to renounce the world and to desire and seek after that which is divine? You are indeed a partaker of the heavenly calling, and by this you have been drawn out of this present evil world. Would you wish to return to it again and reinstate the earthly will which you have renounced as being lord

over you? That precious gospel by which you have been called teaches us that we should renounce ungodliness and the lusts of this world. How then, being subject to the light of the gospel, could you follow your own sinful, and worldly will? Since you have been born of God and have been made a partaker of the divine nature, then as a child you love God as your Father and have received an obedient heart to do the will of your Father and to delight in the law of God after the inward man. What business do you therefore have with your own sinful will, which is hostile to the will of God? Cause it therefore to be silent, trample it under foot when it asserts itself, strive against it, do not yield to it in the least, cast it out, and oppose it by praying, “Not my, but Thy will be done.”

Fourthly, the doing of your own will engenders nothing but sorrow for you. It wounds, defiles, and deforms the soul; it causes sorrow as well as a loss of freedom and peace. God, who is all your light and desire, hides Himself and lets you mourn alone. While standing from afar, you are vulnerable to drifting away further and further by the smallest breeze of lust. Should you then allow yourself to be a safe harbor for your enemy? No, you must expel him and chase him away as you would a thief and a murderer from your home. On the contrary, the renouncing of your own will shall yield much blessing for you as it will give you free access to the Father through Christ. It will engender much peace, result in great personal freedom, and give you boldness to discharge your duty toward others. You will find yourself to be delivered from desires for earthly things and there is thus nothing to lose nor fear. Yes, the Lord will abundantly requite the loss of honor, love, possessions and pleasure with spiritual blessings and occasionally also with temporal blessings—be it in abundance or as much as is needful or beneficial for you.

Compliance with God's Will During Seasons of Affliction

When you pray with your heart, “Thy will be done,” then you are acknowledging the Lord’s majesty, claim, and authority over you. Then you will acknowledge with delight and joy that He alone is sovereign and is Lord, and you are thus fully submitting yourself to Him and His will. You thereby request that He deal with you in full accordance with His will and pleasure, thus acquiescing in the fact that you will have nothing to say in the matter. You are thereby leaving everything in His hands, since you know you are neither able nor willing to act contrary to Him, knowing that He will deal with you in a fatherly manner and, being reconciled with Him in Christ, all things will work together for good for you.

If the Lord then afflicts you—as He will most certainly do with all His children, not one excepted—you are to reflect upon your petition and thus with all quietness subject yourself to the will (this chastising will) of your Father. This is not to imply that you would not be conscious of your cross, for that would be unnatural and an implicit despising of the God who chastises—which provokes Him to wrath. “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved” (Jer 5:3). It is also not contrary to submission to the will of God if we desire to be delivered from those oppressing or threatening circumstances. You may indeed pray for deliverance and you may indeed use lawful means to be delivered from it. However, all this must be practiced while embracing the will of God, being much more desirous that God’s will be done toward us than that we be delivered from the cross. Rather, you would be opposing the Lord’s will if you were fretful. “Neither be weary of his correction” (Prov 3:11). Such occurs when you thereby become discouraged, reject your spiritual state, and view all this as proceeding from the avenging justice and wrath of God; when you harbor hard thoughts toward God and entertain doubts about the providence of God: “Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me” (Job 30:21); “Lest I ... take the name of my God in vain” (Prov 30:9); or when you wish for death and, with Judas, entertain thoughts to hang yourself: “So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life” (Job 7:15). It occurs if you become envious of the prosperity of the wicked: “For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning” (Ps 73:3, 14); and if you begin to doubt as to whether God truly rules all things—whether this evil proceeds from the Lord, whether He sees those who are destitute, and whether He hears their cry or helps them indeed.

To do so is to contend with the Almighty (Job 40:2), and is a hardening of ourselves: “Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered” (Job 9:4). When such or similar thoughts, dispositions, and inner motions manifest themselves, you oppose the Lord, not being submissive to the will of God. Then you bring a threefold cross upon yourself as well as a chastisement which you will not be able to avoid. You will increasingly be afflicted with grief, and not bearing the cross well will be more grievous than the chastisement itself. The cross will also be made heavier and be of longer duration, for God will prevail: “That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (Rom 3:4). You would cause the Lord to withdraw Himself

from you: “Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee” (Jer 6:8). Have you then gained the upper hand? Therefore, in all quietness submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord, and say, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him” (Mic 7:9). Learn from a king to bring your soul into submission unto the Lord. He said in Ps 39:9, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it.”

And should it not behoove you to conduct yourself likewise?

First, is not the Lord the sovereign God? May not He do with His own as pleases Him? Do you have a right to demand from Him why His dealings are thus? Would you indeed desire that the Lord be obligated to you and be required to do your will? Certainly not; you rejoice that He is God, is sovereign, and is exalted above all. Why then, as you acknowledge His majesty, would you not willingly submit yourself to Him—even if it were with tears in your eyes due to the grief you must endure?

Secondly, believers, is not He your reconciled Father in Christ? Does not He act in love—even if it is due to paternal displeasure with your deeds? “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19). Should you then render opposition to love and be fretful over the manifestation of love? This is where the problem lies. You think: “If only I knew that God loves me, I would quietly and willingly endure the affliction.” It is that which begets your fretfulness. Overcome this and humbly submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord and you will better perceive the grace which the Lord has bestowed in you. During temptation you are not able to ascertain your spiritual state by way of the marks of grace. Rather, you must deem this to be a fact, and exercise faith instead. This will bring you closer to God and cause you to look unto Jesus; all that leads to the Lord Jesus, and through Him to God, cannot be counterfeit. Therefore, consider that the cross is a consequence of God’s displeasure over your sinful behavior, but you must at the same time esteem it as proceeding from a paternal heart in order to thereby sanctify you and draw you away from sin. With this in mind, submit yourself unto the Lord. “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9).

Thirdly, the chastisement, when you bear it well and embrace the will of God in it, will be greatly beneficial to you. This is God’s very objective: “He (chastises) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present

seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:10-11).

Even if you do not perceive the beneficial nature of the chastisement, then do not be surprised by this, for the fruit will come afterwards. Therefore, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps 37:5), and you will experience what David experienced and say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word” (Ps 119:71, 75, 67).

The Holy Obligation to Do God’s Will

Believing supplicants, it does not suffice to renounce your own will and to be submissive to the Lord’s will in affliction. Rather, you who pray, “Thy will be done,” must know that it is also your duty to do the will of God by living according to His precepts; for whatever a believer prays, he is also willing to do. Therefore, *acknowledge the obligation* which is upon you *with your whole heart*—not only due to being God’s creature, but also in view of His relationship to you as being your Father in Christ. Submit yourself as such to the Lord and say, “I am Thy servant—yes, I am Thy servant.” Offer yourself to the Lord by reason of that relationship and say, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” Neither do anything carelessly, nor because it seems good to you, *but ask the Lord for counsel*: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Do not ask this with the desire that the Lord would answer you according to your wishes, but as with a sense of holy indifference that it be as it pleases the Lord, seeking for His will in your every deed. God has revealed His will in His Word and we therefore are neither in need of nor should expect, desire, or request immediate revelations each time. Rather, we must come to the Lord by way of His Word which is a lamp for our feet and a light upon our path. Then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all the Lord’s commandments.

Do not only pray, but *listen with readiness and desire for an answer*. Be ready to hear what the Lord will speak to you, desiring that He would not only direct you by His Word as to what His will toward you is, but also that He would enliven your soul and kindle it with love toward His will, and cause you to subscribe to His will with willing obedience and maintain such a disposition in you. *Therefore, let compliance with God’s revealed will be your only duty*, and say with David, “I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I

laid before me. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end” (Ps 119:30, 111-112). Do not only resolve to do so with resolute determination, but *carry it out and engage yourself with delight*. Reverently seek to be pleasing to the Lord in all your deeds. Do not hesitate and neither consult your own will nor consider your own interests, but subscribe to the doing of God’s will *with a ready mind*. Hasten and do not delay to observe the Lord’s commandment. Whatever you do in the Lord’s service, do it with a *zealous spirit* and with fervent earnestness, such being your pleasure and delight. God is not pleased when we perceive our service to Him as troublesome and burdensome. Therefore, greatly delight yourself in the Lord’s commandments, and let it be a joy to you if you may do something which will be pleasing to the Lord. Conquer all external and internal hindrances and opposition. *Persevere courageously in all circumstances* and be as the horse of the Lord’s majesty in battle, while being “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

Final Exhortation

Therefore, children of God, since you pray, “Thy will be done,” and are desirous to do the Lord’s will in the place assigned to you, stir up your soul to that end so that you may execute it in a lively manner. For no matter where you turn, you are surrounded by those who cry out to you, “Oh, do the Lord’s will.”

First, when you focus upon God, you will perceive that He is worthy of this for He is the majestic and exalted One. He is your Maker, and you exist by His powerful influences. If He were to withdraw this but for a moment, you would no longer exist. Apart from His infusion of power you would not be able to see, hear, or move. He who is in such a position and is so dependent upon the exalted, glorious, holy, and omnipotent God—would such a person not be engaged with his entire soul and all its faculties to do His will? Children of God, the Lord loves you. Motivated by love He has given you His Son to be a Surety and Savior. He has redeemed you, granted you spiritual life, adopted you to be His children, and ordained you for eternal glory. When considering that, should you then not receive wings to embrace, love, and do the will of God with a burning heart, solely because He is the Lord and your Father? The church of old boasted in this: “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king” (Isa 33:22).

Secondly, when you focus upon the will of God, you will perceive it to be delightful; all that He requires from us is delightful. “And ... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2). All that God commands is pure and holy. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps 19:7-8). How can someone who knows the Lord refrain from embracing the will of his Lord and from observing His commandments with joy? “It is joy to the just to do judgment” (Prov 21:15).

Thirdly, to do the will of God is to glorify God. It is the delight, pleasure, and joy of a child of God that God be known, feared, and glorified, and that none but He be Lord, the Most High, the Holy One, and the lawgiver. This we do by ourselves and with others when we do His will. “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

Fourthly, our Lord is so good that He will reciprocate to the doer of His will all that he does in His service out of love, with filial fear, and willingly. If we do the Lord’s pleasure—oh wonder—then He will in turn do our pleasure. “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him” (Ps 145:19). He will reward them richly: “In keeping of them there is great reward” (Ps 19:11). All restlessness of the soul is the consequence of doing our own will; but in the doing of God’s will there is nothing but peace: “Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps 119:165). Spiritual life is but feeble in believers and it grieves them that they do not make more progress. Therefore, begin to do the Lord’s will sincerely, according to your feeble strength—as a child—and the Lord will give you increase. “Every branch in Me that beareth ... fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2).

The hiding of God’s countenance is most bitter for a child of God; however, His revelation of Himself to him constitutes all his joy. The Lord grants this privilege to all that do His will: “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways” (Isa 64:5). Therefore, enter upon this way which leads to salvation. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” (Ps 84:5, 7).

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

The Fourth Petition: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

There is a Christian proverb as expressed by a pagan: “*Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano,*” which means: “One ought to pray that there be a healthy soul in a healthy body.” This is in agreement with John’s wish expressed to Gaius: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2). How delightful is this testimony addressed to Gaius! In general we must now reverse this and say, “I wish that your soul may prosper as your body prospers.” For we observe in this that we also are to care for the body, for if we are to hallow God’s Name, edify the congregation, and do the will of God, we are in need of a soul and a body which are both in health. If the one is not healthy, the other will be hindered and the entire man cannot function properly.

The Relationship Between Soul and Body

The soul influences the body. A healthy soul benefits the body, whereas a troubled soul has an ill effect upon the body. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov 17:22). The body also influences the soul and is irritated by ill health. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). This is also evident in the following passage: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:23). The apocryphal book *Wisdom* has a splendid proverb in chapter 9:15: “For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and

the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that nurseth upon many things.” Therefore, we must take care that both soul and body are brought and kept in good health in order to be fit for the service of the Lord. “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:20). If the health of both is to be maintained, they are in need of nourishment. The soul, being an immortal spirit, has no need of anything for the maintenance of its existence except the preserving influence of God. However, for its spiritual well-being it is in need of spiritual food in this life—which is the Word of God applied by faith. The Word of God is the incorruptible seed of her regeneration (1 Pet 1:23). The Word of God is her nourishment, resulting in the growth of her spiritual life. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:2).

The body is also in need of food. It has its origin in the earth and its nourishment proceeds from the earth, whereby both its essence and motions are maintained. Unconverted men, who have nothing in view but earthly things, are very desirous for that which is earthly, wishing to gratify and entertain themselves therewith. In this respect, they almost resemble the irrational animals, for it is as if they live in order to eat, whereas they ought to eat in order to live. “From men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure” (Ps 17:14).

A believer does not wish to have earthly things as his portion—they are beneath him. He does not desire earthly things for their own sake, but as a means unto something else: to maintain the body in a fit condition in order to serve the Lord. He knows that it is only the Lord who causes bread to come forth out of the earth—that “He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry” (Ps 147:9); also giving man his food and raiment: “The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season” (Ps 145:15). He knows that the Lord must also render the food efficacious to be nourishing, and therefore a believer looks unto the Lord and prays, “Feed me with food convenient for me” (Prov 30:8). It is this which the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the *fourth* petition.

The Position of This Petition

Many have investigated why the Lord Jesus places the petition concerning the maintenance of the body in the fourth place and wills that there be prayer for the welfare of the soul in the fifth and sixth petition. It cannot be easily ascertained who has most closely

approximated the reason for this. All agree that this prayer is perfect—not only in regard to the matters it contains, but also as far as the order is concerned. In applying this to this petition some say that the Lord Jesus adjusts Himself to human weakness, which causes man to be very concerned about food and raiment for the body. He would therefore teach us *first* to pray for the body, so that we, being freed from anxiety concerning the body, would have that much more freedom to pray for the welfare of the soul. Others insist that the Lord Jesus wishes to guide us step by step from the physical to the spiritual. Others divide the petitions into two divisions, maintaining that the *first* four petitions are requests for that which is good, whereas the last two petitions are invocations for the averting of evil. They then divide these benefits into heavenly (which precede in the *first* three petitions) and temporal benefits which, being least important, follow in the *fourth* petition, upon which the invocations follow. Again, others divide the petitions as follows: In the *first* three petitions God is the immediate object of the requests; the most eminent petition has the primary position. In the last three petitions, however, man is the immediate object, and that which is least important is listed *first*; one has to exist before he can be well. However, who shall be able to advance an infallible argument regarding the order which will be satisfactory so as not to be subject to counter-argumentation?

We shall now proceed to consider the petition itself. In this petition we must consider individually 1) the matter which is requested: *our daily bread*; 2) for whom we pray: *us*; and 3) the manner in which we request the receipt of bread: not by way of purchase, but as a gift; and not once and for all, but every day. “Give us this day.”

The Matter Requested

The matter requested is bread, which is further defined as *our* and *daily* bread. The word “bread” here does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who calls Himself *the Bread of Life* (John 6:35) because He is the spiritual life of God’s children and the maintainer of that life. The reference here is not to the bread of the Lord’s Supper as it relates to the body of Christ—as is the case in 1 Cor 10:16. Rather, it refers to the common nourishment for the human body. “... that He may bring forth food out of the earth ... and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart” (Ps 104:14-15). In a general sense it refers to all manner of food and all necessities which are subservient to man’s support. Jacob prepared a great meal and invited his brethren “to eat bread: and they did eat

bread” (Gen 31:54). Thus, the Hebrew word *μῆλ* (*lechem*) signifies *bread, that is, all manner of food*. “Who giveth food to all flesh” (Ps 136:25); “I ate no pleasant bread” (Dan 10:3). Since the maintenance of the body is here requested, the word “bread” is also understood to refer to drink as well as clothing—all of which the body needs. Jacob expressed this: “If God ... will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on” (Gen 28:20), and the apostle says, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim 6:8).

All manner of livelihood—particularly food—is expressed here by the word “bread,” this being the preeminent and most nourishing food. “... bread which strengtheneth man’s heart” (Ps 104:15). It is the most essential food, for without bread one cannot live well; however, it is possible to live without meat or fish, these being referred to as supplementary foods (John 21:5).²⁷ It is the most pleasant of all foods: bread always tastes pleasant when we are hungry; we never tire of it. It is the most common of all foods, for people of all ranks—high and low—make use of it. It is the food most used in moderation, for we desire no more of it than we need for the satisfaction of our hunger.

*The Bread Referred to as **Our** Bread*

This bread is designated as *our bread*. Something is referred to as being ours when we either have need of it for our existence, or if we are the owners of it. By nature we do not own anything before God, since by reason of sin we have lost a right to all that Adam had. The earth is cursed due to sin: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen 3:17). And the sinner is cursed in all that he lays his hands on: “Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep” (Deut 28:17-18).

Everything in the heavens—the sun and moon—and here below serves the sinner unwillingly and reluctantly, and groans contrary to him (Rom 8:20-22). Nevertheless, it is the Lord’s goodness that He grants food and raiment to sinners in whom He has no pleasure—sometimes more abundantly than to the godly who are not intended to have more of this so that they may know that God is good. However, the bread—all that the godly enjoy, and all that they pray for—belongs to them; they have a right to it.

First, they have a right to it through Christ. The Lord Jesus has

²⁷ The Statenvertaling uses the word “toespijze” here, that is, “supplementary foods.” The KJV simply uses the word “meat.”

purchased it with His blood and, they being His favorites, has given it to them. “For all things are yours; ... things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s” (1 Cor 3:21-23).

Secondly, they have a right to it from man’s perspective, since that which they possess has rightfully become theirs either by way of inheritance, business transactions, or their labor. This is in contrast to unrighteousness, laziness, and wasteful spending which causes one to be reduced to poverty and he must then live from the generosity of others. The apostle confirms this: “... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thess 3:12). If, however, someone has applied himself and has been thrifty, and yet is unable to make any progress, requiring the support of others, this is not unrighteous. Rather, it is his bread which the Lord has given him—even though “it is more blessed (more blissful, honest, and delightful) to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The ungodly, as far as man is concerned—even though they have no right to anything in reference to God—nevertheless, have a right to all that they possess lawfully. When we pray for bread, we are also praying against poverty. “Give me neither poverty nor riches” (Prov 30:8).

*This Bread Referred to as **Daily Bread***

We pray here for bread—for *our bread*, and for *daily bread*. Since the word “daily,” as recorded here in the original text, is nowhere else to be found in the New Testament, there are several sentiments regarding the origin of this word. Yet there is no implicit absurdity in this matter. The exception here is that the papists, by deriving the word from ε/πι0 (*epi*) and ο)υσι/α (*ousia*), translate it as *supernatural essence*. They understand this to refer to the bread of the mass, and since in their opinion the bread vanishes and changes into Christ, they thus understand it to refer to Christ, who is repeatedly referred to as “bread” in John 6. Aside from the fact that *transubstantiation* is nothing but a fabrication, the word does not imply this—even if it were derived from ε/πι0 ο)υσι/α (*epi ousia*), for the word ο)υσι/α (*ousia*) never signifies *essence* in the New Testament. Rather, in Luke 15:12-13 (there being no other references) it signifies possessions—temporal possessions. “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me ... and there wasted his substance.” And even if this had been imported from pagan philosophers and understood to refer to the extra-essential, it would not signify supernatural, spiritual bread—that is not implied by the word at all. Rather, *extra-essential* would mean that we are in need of bread outside of our essential existence in

order to support and maintain our essential existence. Such is the interpretation of this word by many Reformed. Others maintain that it is a derivative of the word εἰπειμι (epeimi), that is, “to follow,” “to come in the place of.” As a second aorist active participle we have εἰπιων, εἰπιου~σα (*epioon, epiousa*), from which is derived εἰπιου&σιω (*epiousios*), that is, “following,” “that which follows.” As such it is understood in Acts 7:26: εἰπιου&ση η(με/ρα, the following day. In this sense (albeit with a different word) it is used in James 2:15: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food.” And in Luke 11:3 the phrase *day by day* is added to this petition. On the basis of this, the above word can correctly be translated as *daily*, or *bread which follows day by day*—for it is the will of God that man would exist by the use of daily nourishment, rather than receiving everything all at once. This concludes the first portion: the matter requested.

For Whom this Request Is Made

The second portion pertains to the persons *for whom* we request bodily sustenance: “Give us.” The pronoun “us” refers to:

First, *the supplicants themselves*, for people are most closely involved with themselves. Love must begin with ourselves, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love must therefore begin in ourselves, but must not end in ourselves; rather it is to extend to our neighbor.

Secondly, we pray for *all God’s children* who, together with us, address God as *our Father*, and we thus pray for the entire church of God, as if we say: “Thy children—Thy church is defenseless. They are neither able nor willing to govern their own affairs nor to make ends meet with either legitimate or illegitimate means. Such is the practice of the world which has as its objective to harm Thy children and church as much as possible. Therefore, care Thou for them and provide food and raiment for them, so that they may be able to live, and that the world may see that Thou art their God and Father who protects and cares for them.”

Thirdly, their love, and thus also their compassion, goes yet beyond that. The godly pray for all men who have been created in identical fashion as we were, and share the same existence with us. Since they need food and raiment as we do, they pray that the Lord who has granted them life may also preserve their life through nourishment. For believers are of the same nature as their heavenly Father, who “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt 5:45); “The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His

works” (Ps 145:9). Herein they rejoice and praise God for it, and they are thus moved to request that which is good for themselves.

The Manner of Their Request

The third portion relates to the manner in which the godly pray. They neither demand it as if they had a claim to it, nor do they desire to bargain for it. Rather, they request it as a gift: “Out of unmerited goodness, *give.*” They do not even request this for their entire lifetime, but repeatedly ask it for *today*.

When we pray, “Give,” then we acknowledge thereby:

- (1) that we cannot exist in and of ourselves;
- (2) that we are neither capable of producing nourishment, nor of rendering to food the efficacy to be nourishing;
- (3) that we have not merited it, but by our sins have made ourselves unworthy of the same;

(4) that it is the Lord who renders the earth fruitful, bringing “forth food out of the earth” (Ps 104:14). It is the Lord who gives to each his portion; He renders food efficacious for nourishment. Neither our care, our labor, nor the food itself will be to our benefit apart from the Lord’s blessing. Such is the case when “the Lord...doth take away...the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,” which is what He threatens to do in Isaiah 3:1; that is, when “ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes” (Hag 1:6). On the contrary, however, when the Lord bestows His blessing then everything prospers: “Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn” (Ps 65:11, 13). Then our food will satisfy us and our raiment will warm us: “...to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing” (Isa 23:18). Thus, as children we are to pray to the Lord as our Father, asking Him that He would give us food to eat and clothing to wear; that He would grant us health to partake of our food; and that He would render our food efficacious unto nourishment, since in all things we are dependent upon the Lord and are to expect all things from Him.

We are to pray that God would give us our bread *today*. “Today” implies repeated prayer—as much as we need it. We are in need of bread each day, and each day is today. Thus, we do not pray to receive it once and for all, but rather, that we would receive it each day by renewal. This is not to suggest that we should consume it all each day, for God in one day generally gives a portion for many days. Rather, we acknowledge each day that what we have is from

the Lord; that it has been preserved by the Lord and that He has permitted us to keep it; and that also upon this day we are permitted to eat to the satisfaction of our hunger and to the maintenance of our strength. For, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). If we have nothing in supply, we are to petition God that He would give us on this day as He is pleased and able to give us—even if we cannot perceive where it will come from. “The eyes of all wait on Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season” (Ps 145:15). Oh, how sweet it is to live out of the hand of God and to have confidence free from any apprehension!

The Lessons this Petition Teaches

This petition provides us with many essential and beneficial lessons. When we pray for bread we are reminded that we are not to be a gourmand,²⁸ for then we do not pray in a pleasing manner. The apostle speaks of this in James 4:3: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” To be a gourmand does not relate to the ability to taste the distinction between foods, preferring the one over the other; or if, upon being ill, we reflect about what we have an appetite for; or if occasionally we enjoy delicious foods, eat the fat things, drink that which is sweet, and send portions to the poor (Neh 8:11). One is a gourmand:

(1) if, being healthy, he reflects upon that which is delectable, and how it will be prepared in the most delectable manner;

(2) if he has a continual longing for something delectable, for dining engagements, and thinks of exotic spreads in his imagination;

(3) when he is occupied with gourmet foods to such a degree that it appears to be the very essence of enjoyment, and if this is frequently the subject of conversation;

(4) if he pursues such delicacies at any cost, even if he would have to borrow from others and never pay them back;

(5) if he is in a bad humor when he is deprived of something delectable, and if he complains, grumbles, frets, and is angry if food is not properly prepared, and commonly quarrels with the cook;

(6) if he enjoys a delectable meal either at his own or someone else’s table, and then overindulges to such an extent that he is not fit for anything else but sleep.

²⁸ à Brakel describes a gourmand as someone who is “lekker.” His use of this word is archaic as far as modern Dutch is concerned. The use of the word “gourmand” here is appropriate when considering Webster’s definition: “One who is excessively fond of eating and drinking.”

First, you who are a gourmand—how can you pray for bread if you have had enough bread and your soul abhors it as being lowly and distasteful food, and you only make use of it to render other foods all the more delicious? Bread is the basic food, and all other foods are dainties. You reverse this, however, by making bread a dainty; you do not pray this petition sincerely, but you mock with God by your inattentive and irreverent prattling. And even if in some measure you are conscious of what you are praying for, you are ultimately not interested in bread, but rather in delicacies.

Secondly, you can thus readily convince yourself that you serve your belly more than you serve God. Be ashamed, you who commit idolatry with your abominable idol. The apostle speaks of such: “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame” (Phil 3:19).

Thirdly, due to your fondness for gourmet foods you are depriving your children, so that they would be poor when they become adults. They could have been well-to-do if you had been frugal, and you yourself may come to great poverty, so that you will have to be supported by the deacons. Solomon forewarns you about this: “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty” (Prov 23:20-21). He who always wishes to drink that which is sweet and eat that which is delectable will accumulate neither possessions for himself nor treasures for his children. “He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich” (Prov 21:17).

Fourthly, if we are accustomed to a gourmet spread upon our tables, and we begin to lack funds, we shall pursue sinful avenues to continue this. We shall either buy on credit, take out a loan, lie and deceive, at last flirt with bankruptcy, and allow widows and orphans, whom one has robbed, to eat the bread of tears.

Fifthly, gourmands are generally merciless toward the poor. They have abundance upon their tables, but there is nothing left for a poor Lazarus. They must thus look forward to a merciless judgment.

Sixthly, if you remain so rich that you can live as a gourmand until your death—what then? Will you go to heaven? No, but you will experience what the elegant rich man—who was also a gourmand—experienced. After his death he found himself in hell and he was not permitted to have one drop of water for his relief (Luke 16:22ff). Hear how the Lord threatens you: “Woe to them that are at ease. ... That ... stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; therefore now shall they go captive with the *first* that go captive ... therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein”

(Amos 6:1,4,7-8). Impress the word of the apostle upon your heart: “Weep and howl. ... Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter” (James 5:1, 5).

Diligence Taught in This Petition

We do not only pray for bread, but for *our bread*. This teaches that we are to be diligent, since we desire to receive it in the way in which it pleases God to give it. It is, however, God’s will to give by means of our labor, and we must therefore labor in the station and the calling to which God has appointed us. If one has an adequate supply, he must nevertheless neither be idle nor fatten himself as a swine. Rather, he must be occupied in some measure for the sake of being occupied, to benefit himself and to give other people an opportunity to work, as well as be able to give to the poor all the more abundantly.

First, what else—as the proverb goes—is an idle person, but a pillow for the devil? He is the object of the devil’s operations who is most successful in leading idle persons to the commission of various sins. An idle and lazy person is a breeding ground for all manner of vain and sinful thoughts, and of the deeds which proceed from them—yes, he is capable of such deeds as one would otherwise never have imagined.

Secondly, if we pray this and are not desirous to work, we are tempting God. Then we insist that God do miracles for our sake and depart from His normal way of providence. This is a sin which provokes God and is expressly forbidden by Him. “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Deut 6:16). We can read in the accounts of the journeys of the children of Israel in the wilderness how Israel fared when they tempted God. This is also recorded in the following passages: “They waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Ps 106:13-15); “And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague” (Num 11:33). Such are the results of tempting God. This is what those who pray for bread but are not willing to work and do not wish to avail themselves of God’s common means must expect.

Thirdly, a sluggard:

(1) is an abomination to God; God wanted no part of a useless ass (Exod 13:13);

(2) is a burden to others and despised by everyone; no one has compassion for him (Prov 10:26);

(3) furthermore, wastes away, for he does not know how he will spend his time, is a burden to himself, and is reduced to extreme poverty. “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Prov 6:9-11); “Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Prov 23:21).

Therefore, he who prays for *our bread* must be diligent in an honest calling and must use the means to which God obligates him when He promises bread to him. His labor is not the cause, but only the means whereby he lawfully receives what God grants him.

(1) He will then eat his bread in the presence of God and man. “... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thess 3:12).

(2) When he prays in faith and labors obediently, it will all be blessed—be it that one has much or little, or that it is lean or fat. “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” (Ps 37:16). He eats it with freedom as being his own; a piece of bread is delicious to him since he receives it from his heavenly Father, it having been purchased by Christ’s blood. The curse has been removed, a blessing rests upon it, and the little that he has satisfies and strengthens him. The Lord grants him the blessing for which Moses prayed: “Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it” (Ps 90:17). He receives the promise made to the godly: “For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands” (Ps 128:2). Therefore, *Ora et Labora*, that is, pray and work. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Eccles 9:10).

Concerning Anxiety for the Future

When we pray that God would give us our *daily bread* from day to day, we are exhorted *not to be careful*—that is, we are not to be concerned how we shall fare all the days of our life; whether we shall sufficiently be supplied for our entire life; whether we shall be reduced to poverty and shall suffer want with our children of that which our children and grandchildren will live from. For if our desires and concerns relate to the quantity of bread and to our entire life—yes, to our descendants, then we can indeed not pray for bread for this day. Therefore, if we are to pray this prayer with a true heart, we must be satisfied with the present and not be concerned about the day of tomorrow. Rather, we should be as children who, when they are hungry, request food from their

parents and are not concerned about the future. God's children have all the more reason to live out of the hand of their heavenly Father and to trust Him that He will care for them.

First, apprehension torments man and we thereby bring much grief upon ourselves. Such anxiety saps the vitality of the soul and the body. We shall tremble about the future, be doubtful about the providence of God, or view God as being wrathful, merciless, and unyielding. We then reject our spiritual state, are vulnerable to many foolish and harmful lusts, and lie open for the assaults of the devil.

Secondly, what have you ever gained with all your anxiety? You will indeed have to answer: *nothing*. Why then do you engage in that which is of no benefit to you and causes you harm instead? "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" (Matt 6:27); "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows" (Ps 127:2).

Thirdly, to do so is to live in sin continually, for to be anxious is a clear sign that we wish to put our trust in our possessions. If we had as much as we desired, we would not be concerned about the future. Why not? Because you then would have in your pocket what you need to live. Then you do not trust in God but in your possessions. However, whatever you put your trust in is your god, and thus being anxious is nothing but idolatry. Believers, would you then turn away from your God, esteeming and trusting your money more than God? Therefore, be fearful of that abomination which brings many into hell. "But ... idolaters ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev 21:8).

Furthermore, fretful anxiety constitutes a continual dishonoring of God. You thereby demonstrate that God is not all-sufficient for you and that something besides God is your portion, delight, and the rock of your heart. This was entirely different with Asaph (Ps 73:25-26). You give an evil impression of God to others, implying that He neglects and does not care for His children. Would it not be to the dishonor of a rich father if his children were to turn to other persons and were to beg for a piece of bread? Would you thus dishonor God, your heavenly Father? Far be it from you! Therefore, neither be anxious, nor let the unsettledness of your countenance convey that you mistrust God.

Fourthly, anxiety prevents many from being converted. Such occasionally are under conviction and make a resolution: "I shall now arise and also seek God." However, the cares of life again draw them into the world. The cares of life are the thorns which choke the seed. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness

of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt 13:22). As anxiety keeps many from conversion, it likewise impedes growth in the converted. How much progress many would make; how mature they would become had anxiety not prevented them! Therefore, you who are godly, elevate yourself above this world; it is too insignificant, polluted, and harmful than that you should concern yourself with and yearn for it.

Fifthly, time here is short, and there is nothing which is able to satisfy you anyway. Why are you then so anxious about that which is insignificant? Truly, you are still too much involved with the world and not enough with heaven.

Sixthly, is not God your portion? Is He not your Father? Did He not grant you His own Son? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” (Rom 8:32).

Therefore, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Matt 6:25); “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Pet 5:7); “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps 37:5); “Be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). You will thus be able to pray with a childlike heart, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Satisfaction with the Portion the Lord Allots us

When we pray, “Give us ...,” then we do not only pray for ourselves, but also for others. We may therefore not be *envious* when another person receives something—yes, more than we do. For:

(1) We have asked for this on his behalf if we have prayed aright. And if we become envious when he receives something or much upon our prayer, then this is indicative that we either regret that we have prayed, or that we did not mean it and thus have mocked with God.

(2) Who are you to be envious of someone else’s fortune? Do you not know that you are neither worthy of a piece of bread in your mouth nor a thread upon your skin; that it is only due to the longsuffering of God that you are not already in hell; that it is a great mercy of God that you are permitted to be among people and that you might be a servant or a slave of the least of them? And should you then be envious? Or do you think that you are so important that you are worthy of it? Be silent!

(3) Is it not the Lord who gives unto others? God is sovereign, is He not, and may He not do with His own as pleases Him? Or must He ask you how much He should give to such and such a person?

Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? Be therefore ashamed before God and man that an envious thought arises within you.

This Petition Exhorts to Generosity

You who pray, “Give us ...,” it behooves you and you are obligated by this petition toward *generosity*. For when many make a request together and it is given to one, it must be divided among all on whose behalf it was requested. When many poor outcasts are begging at a given door, and if one receives a gift and keeps it for himself, he deprives the others of what also had been given for them. However, you do not pray, “Give me ...,” but “Give us ...”; thus, others must share in this. This does not mean that as soon as you receive something, you must immediately begin to hand it out, for you have received it as a steward to disperse it upon command. If therefore there are those in need who request something from you, or if it comes to your knowledge that there is someone in need elsewhere, then this must stir up your compassion and your hand must be ready to give. You must, however, do it in such a manner that you may continue to be able to give and that the welfare of your family and children is preserved. Extraordinary seasons and occasions also demand something extraordinary. Therefore, see to it that in truth and with liberty you may pray, “Give us ...”

First, take as an example the generosity of the man Job, and of a woman named Dorcas. Job’s generosity is described as follows: “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor” (Job 29:15-16); “If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering,” etc. (Job 31:16-17, 19). Of Dorcas it is written, “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. ... All the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made” (Acts 9:36, 39). Happy is he or she who follows such examples!

Secondly, the following passages convey how highly generosity is recommended: “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates. ... Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, “ (Deut 15:7-8). To obey in this is pleasing to God. “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). Indeed,

impress upon your heart the great word of the apostle: “God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7); “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6). Add to these the following: “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again” (Prov 19:17). If you then desire to pray in truth and to be heard, be joyously generous. If you do not do so, then you are an unrighteous possessor of that which you have, and you must see to it that a curse will not rest upon it.

God Acknowledged as the Giver

Since you pray to God for daily bread, it is thus essential for you to believe that all good gifts and the blessing upon that which you have, come from God, and that you *acknowledge God as being the origin of all good things*. Such He truly is: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). All that exists is God’s; whatever anyone possesses he has received from God. “I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, ... my corn ... my wine ... my wool and my flax” (Hos 2:8-9). Man is but a naked entity and all that he has does not proceed from himself. All that he has proceeds from another source—he has received it from God alone. “What hast thou that thou didst not receive” (1 Cor 4:7). The Lord causes food to come forth from the earth; the Lord grants to each his peculiar portion; the Lord renders the food efficacious unto nourishment; the Lord maintains man and beast; He even provides the cattle with their food and the young ravens when they cry to Him. Since all is the Lord’s and He communicates to everyone that which is His, one must invoke the Lord for all that we stand in need of and acknowledge Him as the origin and giver. We must not do so, however, with the disposition of a creature, but as a reconciled child in Christ and with a childlike heart. If we receive something, we must receive it as out of the hand of God as being our Father. We must be satisfied with that which the Father gives—be it much or little, it will be enough. Therefore we ought not to waste it, but with a joyful heart make use of it. We must then always lift up our heart on high to the Giver, doing so with a grateful heart and with a mouth filled with the praises of the Lord. “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat” (Ps 147:12-14). God requires

and expects this, and is pleased with it. “When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God” (Deut 8:10-11).

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our Debtors

Man is in need of bread in order that he may live. Therefore the Lord has taught us to pray for bread. Bread is not the most essential matter, however, for man has a rational, immortal soul which innately knows God and cannot be satisfied except with God Himself. A natural man is indeed satisfied with earthly things—if he is able to acquire them. This is recorded in Ps 17:14, where we read: “Men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure.” And God will not permit them to depart from this life without having done them good: “Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). That is the extent of God’s dealings with them. However, God has laid away something greater for His own. Furthermore, He has also given them a heart which is not satisfied with earthly things, but they desire the Lord and choose Him as their portion. With their whole heart they make the words of Asaph their own: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps 73:25-26, 28). With their entire heart they offer themselves to the service of God; however, at the same time they understand that God does not wish to be served by the ungodly who are His enemies. God says to them: “What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth” (Ps 50:16). The godly perceive that sin, which makes a

separation between God and man, must be removed in order for God to reveal Himself to them, and for them to approach unto God with boldness and with a peaceful heart. Therefore they are very desirous to be reconciled with God, praying time and again for the forgiveness of sins. This the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the *fifth* petition: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

This petition consists *first* of all in a request: “Forgive ...” *Secondly*, the disposition of the supplicant is added: “As we forgive our debtors.” In this petition we are to note the object: “Debts—our debts,” and the requested action toward these debts: “Forgive us.”

The Object of this Petition: Our Debts

Let us consider the word “debts” (in Luke 11:4 we read “sins”). Sin incurs debt, and in order to know what debt is, we must take note of three matters:

First, man is entirely and in every respect bound to God as *Creator*. Thus, his being, life, spiritual faculties, and physical strength are from God. This must not be understood as a singular act once performed, man thereafter being his own master as well as self-existent. Rather, he exists and moves by the continual influence and preserving power of God. It is for this reason that man is obligated to exist for God with his entire being—not only as a matter of gratitude, but on account of an obligation which is more binding than we can imagine. He is also obligated to God *by virtue of the covenant of works*, established with the human race in Adam, whereby salvation was promised upon condition of obedience—a covenant to which man has fully committed himself. Thus, there is an obligation upon man to be submissively obedient. He is also bound to God as being his *lawgiver*, who has power to command, and to whom man is inherently obligated to render obedience (Luke 17:10). Man approves of this obligation, and irrespective of whether he breaks those bonds, there is nevertheless no one who would dare to say, or who will say, that he is not under obligation to God.

Secondly, this binding relationship, however much it may have been approved of, has been broken by man and he still breaks it daily by withdrawing himself from obedience to God and by continually resisting this obligation. The Holy Scriptures refer to this as:

- (1) sinning: “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (Ps 51:4);
- (2) transgressing against the Lord: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me” (Isa 1:2);

- (3) the transgression of the law: “Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law” (Dan 9:11);
- (4) the transgression of the covenant: “But they like men have transgressed the covenant” (Hos 6:7);
- (5) the rending asunder of God’s laws: “These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds” (Jer 5:5);
- (6) the forsaking of God, His law, and His covenant: “They have forsaken the Lord” (Isa 1:4); “... because they have forsaken my law” (Jer 9:13); “They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God” (Jer 22:9);
- (7) being disobedient: “But unto them that ... do not obey the truth” (Rom 2:8).

Sin is all the more serious in light of the majesty of God and man’s dependence upon Him—as well as its voluntary and deliberate nature, and its continuance and frequency. Furthermore, the greater the measure of light and the livelier the conscience, the greater the sin will be.

Thirdly, due to man’s breach of obligation, he incurs debt; that is, he is worthy of punishment. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy” (Heb 10:29); “... receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom 1:27). Sin begets debt and places us under bondage of eternal condemnation: “... for the judgment was by one to condemnation” (Rom 5:16). Through sin man has come under the curse which is expressed as follows: “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them” (Deut 27:26). He is therefore at enmity with God, worthy to be cast away and to endure eternally the unbearable wrath of God. “Neither shall evil dwell with Thee” (Ps 5:4); “... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil” (Rom 2:8-9); “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:9).

Such is the nature of the debt, and this debt is acknowledged by all men. It is acknowledged by the heathen: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death” (Rom 1:32). This is acknowledged by all who live under the ministry of the Word: “And all the people shall say, Amen” (Deut 27:20). Believers acquiesce in this: “... that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (Ps 51:4); “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him” (Mic 7:9). Sincere prayer for the forgiveness of sins necessitates that a person know his guilt, be

grievously sensible of it, acknowledge himself to be worthy of this punishment, and justify God in executing judgment upon him.

The Focus of This Petition: The Forgiveness of Guilt

We pray for the forgiveness of *our* debts (or guilt).²⁹ No one has imposed this debt upon us. God did not do so for He created man holy and perfect. The devil did not do so—he may suggest sin, but he can neither compel nor cause us to sin. The world has not done so. It may threaten and entice, but it is beyond its reach to incline one’s will. Rather, it is man himself who is the cause of his deeds. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin” (James 1:14-15); “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee” (Jer 2:19); “Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter” (Jer 4:18); “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins” (Lam 3:39).

This supplicant does not only acknowledge that he has sinned, but also that he is a debtor—having an exceedingly great debt. He furthermore acknowledges that he is thereby marred, abominable, hateful, intolerable, and condemnable. Being thus grievously affected by his sins, he humbles himself before the Lord and supplicates His Judge to be gracious unto him—yes, he approaches to his Father with shame, for he can neither leave his Father alone nor can he endure the alienation and displeasure of his heavenly Father. He would rather be chastised and by renewal be reconciled with his Father than to continue unreconciled without chastisement. He therefore approaches with sorrow and perplexity, and prays, “Forgive me my sins and take away my debt from me.”

The Requested Action: Forgiveness

The petition relative to these debts is: “Forgive; forgive us ...” Forgiveness comes about either by way of annulment or satisfaction. A father forgives his child either by not punishing him, or, if he punishes him, the forgiveness is still needful in order that the child may be at peace. Such is the practice among men. However, God cannot forgive debt except that punishment has been meted out for it. This is to be taken to heart, for many people, not knowing this, imagine forgiveness when there is no forgiveness. Since they do not seek forgiveness in the right manner, they

²⁹ The literal translation of the Dutch rendering of this petition is: “Forgive us our guilt.”

continue to be deprived of it and will become subject to everlasting judgment. They imagine that God functions as man does. They deem a man to be good and merciful if he forgives someone who has wronged him, and who, confessing his guilt, humbles himself deeply and prays for forgiveness. If someone would then not be willing to forgive, such conduct would be esteemed evil in everyone's eyes and he would be despised as a cruel person. They therefore reason as follows: "God is more merciful than man and God is good. He will therefore surely forgive those who ask Him to be gracious." Furthermore, if from henceforth such a person does his best to lead a godly life, he is at peace. It does not matter whether he has spent his life in ungodliness; as long as he prays upon his deathbed, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!" He is forgiving to others who have done him wrong; he regrets his sinful life, and in this frame he dies. Such a person is most certainly deemed to be saved. Poor man! Awake, for this is the way whereby thousands of people go to hell. Do not proceed in this manner; rather, be acquainted with the way whereby God forgives sin. Enter upon this way before it is too late, so that you may yet be saved.

I thus maintain that God neither can nor will permit sin to go unpunished. God punishes sin both temporally and eternally. In order to fully convince you of this, you must note that God is not only Lord and lawgiver, but He is also the Judge of all men. Abraham states, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen 18:25). David acknowledged God as such: "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11).

Every man will come before God in judgment. "For God shall bring every work into judgment" (Eccles 12:14); "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccles 11:9). Not only does every man, upon death, appear before God as Judge, to be either ushered to hell or taken into glory—for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27)—but all men will appear simultaneously before God in the great judgment, where everything will transpire according to righteousness. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Enoch—the *seventh* from Adam—knew, acknowledged, and preached this: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all ... that are ungodly" (Jude 14-15). I the writer, and you who read or hear this read, shall come before that judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10).

Let us consider this judgment from every perspective. All men will appear there and will be divided into two groups. The one group will be condemned for no other reason but sin. God is the Judge and a righteous Judge. Does not justice consist in the rendering to everyone his just desert, and is not a righteous judge someone who either punishes or acquits in harmony with the condition in which one is found? It is common knowledge that a judge must do right: A guilty person must be declared guilty and an innocent person must be acquitted. Mercy may not move him to acquit the guilty one. As good-natured and compassionate a person a judge may be, he must not allow a murderer to go free. He must condemn him to death since justice requires this. However, is God not more righteous than man? Thus, His righteousness requires that He condemn the sinner. Here goodness is not the issue, but justice. This is confirmed by the expressions God makes concerning Himself: "... and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod 34:7). Tell me: "Why does God condemn those who will be at His left hand? Is He not infinitely merciful? Why then is He not gracious to them?" There must therefore be another reason for bringing about the condemnation of the sinner. What is this? There can be no other reason than the righteousness and veracity of God. Would not the Judge of the whole earth do right? Is God's judgment not according to truth? "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom 2:2). Since sinners are not delivered from hell by the mercy of God, and God is a righteous Judge whose judgment is according to truth and who can by no means clear the guilty, God cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and thus the sinner cannot expect forgiveness by way of annulment.

What counsel is there then for the sinner? Must they all perish? There is no solution with man himself, for he cannot exhaustively bear the punishment due to sin. He cannot transcend his punishment for he cannot give God his ransom; he must eternally remain subject to it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt 16:26). Sin is a reality which man cannot deny. All his suffering in this world cannot render satisfaction. All his good works—aside from the fact that they are not pure before God and are but as filthy rags—cannot erase sins which have previously been committed. He retains a sinful heart, and all manner of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds continue to proceed therefrom. The soul, upon departing from the body, remains sinful; and as long as sin continues, so long will the punishment continue—that is, eternally.

Man's Need of a Surety

In order for man to be delivered from guilt and punishment and be exonerated in the righteous judgment of God, he must have a Surety who, on his behalf, satisfies the justice of God, bears the punishment which the sinner deserves, and perfectly fulfills the law. This payment and obedience must be reckoned to the account of the sinner by divine imputation, God permitting the intervention of a Surety. Man, in turn, must acquiesce in being delivered by a Surety and must receive His ransom and righteousness as his own in order to come unto God thereby. This way is hidden from all the heathen and God also conceals it from all the unconverted who live under the gospel—although some can explain this in an external sense and can speak of this as such. However, God reveals this way to His own and leads them in that way. The Lord Jesus, being very God and man, has been given of God Himself to be a Surety. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22). He has made payment for the elect on their behalf: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18). Thereby believers are reconciled with God. “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom 5:10). Hereby peace with God has been merited. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). He who has Jesus as a Surety is complete in Him. “And ye are complete in Him” (Col 2:10); “... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21). This is the way in which forgiveness of sin is to be obtained; apart from this way there is no forgiveness.

Question: How can there be forgiveness if payment has been made?

Answer: If we were to have endured all punishment in person, and if we in person had perfectly fulfilled the law of God, there would be a more valid reason for this question. However, since all this occurs by way of a Surety; there is a need for the imputation of the ransom and righteousness of the Surety. It is needful for man to receive this believingly and when the sinner thus comes to God he will receive forgiveness. In this there is a simultaneous manifestation of the justice of God as Judge and of His goodness as a reconciled Father, for the same nature which has sinned must make restitution. The Surety has become surety with the approbation of the Judge, and the Father is satisfied with the Surety. Since He is satisfied with the execution of the suretyship, both its application and forgiveness are therefore righteous. Man has contributed nothing to this; he is guilty in and of himself and thus forgiveness is entirely gracious as far as he is concerned. Thus,

payment and forgiveness harmonize very well, whereas forgiveness and application remain distinct acts.

When praying for forgiveness here, we do not do so in a different sense from what believers did in the Old Testament. They also obtained forgiveness as well as we. We find the word ἀ!φεω (*aphes*) here. Its usage here is not unique to the New Testament and does not stand in contradistinction to παρεσιω (*paresis*)—as if this were unique to the Old Testament only and that Old Testament believers only knew of an overlooking of sin while we have actual forgiveness. For forgiveness is denominated ἀ!φεσιω (*aphesis*) in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22). At that particular moment the Old Testament was still in full force; nevertheless the Lord Jesus caused His disciples to pray: ἀ!φεω (*aphes*).

This Petition: The Believer’s Prayer for Paternal Forgiveness

In praying for forgiveness here, the supplicant does not view himself as unconverted and unreconciled, and as desirous to be delivered from the state of wrath (believers being children of wrath by nature as all others); rather, he views himself as being a child of God, for he prays, “Our Father, forgive us.” God deals with His children in human fashion. As a father shows his displeasure over the misbehavior of his children, God likewise shows His displeasure to His children when they have sinned. He withdraws Himself from intimate fellowship with them, hides His countenance, lets them feel His fatherly wrath, and punishes them with a remorseful, restless, and anxious conscience. Inner peace has departed, and a lack of freedom overcomes them within and without. Such a condition causes the believer to be very perplexed, and he goes to his Father, confesses his misdeeds, takes refuge to the blood of the Lord Jesus, and prays, “Forgive.” To such the Lord will manifest Himself and He will forgive them time and again.

Forgiveness Implied

The following is implied in forgiveness:

First, there is the absence of punishment: “O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure” (Ps 6:1), and there is no imputation of sin; that is, he is not dealt with as a sinner: “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity” (Ps 32:2).

Secondly, upon forgiveness God neither hides His countenance—which alone is the life of the soul of a child of God—nor withdraws His presence, nor conceals Himself as with a cloud so

that no prayer can penetrate, nor does He hold Himself as a stranger. “And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Ps 143:2); “Hear me speedily, O Lord...hide not Thy face from me” (Ps 143:7).

Thirdly, there is the assurance of forgiveness; that is, a frame of heart is granted in which there is freedom from the burden of debt and a sense of the forgiveness of sin. “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Ps 32:5); “Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back” (Isa 38:17). David prayed for this: “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” (Ps 35:3). This was stated to Isaiah: “Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isa 6:7).

Fourthly, peace is bestowed upon the soul. Sin wounds the soul—makes her restless, fearful, and anxious. When God forgives sin, however, there comes sweet quietude and inexpressible peace. Such was David’s desire: “Blot out my transgressions...purge me...wash me...make me to hear joy and gladness” (Ps 51:1, 7-8). God promises this: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned” (Isa 40:1-2). Such has been the experience of the church: “O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me” (Isa 12:1).

Fifthly, it results in free access to God as being a reconciled Father: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb 10:19, 22).

Sixthly, forgiveness implies restoration of fellowship with God—which was discontinued due to sin—in which God embraces the soul intimately. “Thou hast in love to my soul³⁰ delivered it ... Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back” (Isa 38:17). The soul in turn meets God with filial joy and delight. “And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” (Isa 33:24). She joyfully gives thanks to the Lord: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities” (Ps 103:2-3).

All this constitutes forgiveness. It is this which the supplicant requests in this petition, and it is this which God grants to believing supplicants. He indeed forgives whenever and as often as His

³⁰ The Statenvertaling differs from the KJV here. The phrase, “Thou hast in love to my soul,” reads as follows: “Gij hebt mijne ziel liefelijk omhelsd,” that is, “Thou hast in love embraced my soul.”

children confess their sins, receive the Lord Jesus as their ransom and righteousness, and pray for forgiveness. However, the Lord does not always grant them all the matters mentioned. He also does not always grant it in the measure that they desire; at times God permits them to run after Him for a long period of time. They are frequently slack in their seeking, listless in prayer, unbelieving, discouraged, not fully emptied of sinful lusts, and thus not fit to enjoy these sweet experiences. Therefore there comes darkness at times when they anticipate light, and fearfulness instead of healing. However, the Lord will ultimately “regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Ps 102:17). Therefore, persevere in prayer and do not only pray for yourself, but also for the church and all believers, for they are all burdened by sin and many go bent down because of it. There is no peace in their soul due to their sin; they are grieved and they long for forgiveness, so that with more freedom of heart they may praise Him, fear Him filially, and sweetly progress in the ways of the Lord. This is the *first* portion of this petition: “Forgive us our debts.”

The Disposition of the Supplicant

The second portion conveys the disposition of the supplicant: “As we forgive our debtors.” There are a great variety of opinions about this addition. One thing is certain, these words are not a meritorious cause of God’s forgiveness, for then it would have to read, “... because we forgive.” Instead, the word « (hoos) (= as) is used. If that were true then it would not be a petition, but a demand for that which is ours. Furthermore, forgiveness is granted on the basis of grace. “Being justified freely by His grace” (Rom 3:24). It is equally evident that this does not imply that our forgiveness is on an equal par with God’s forgiveness. God forgives as Judge and as Father; we forgive our equals. God forgives perfectly, and we deficiently. It is also not a condition in the literal sense of the word, for then it would come about by way of contract with God. Rather, it is a humble supplication for grace; it is a *conditio sine qua non*, or an *indispensable or essential condition*; that is, a required disposition for being a suitable object to request and receive forgiveness. For if someone is enraged against his neighbor and lashes out in anger in order to avenge himself, then it can be understood by all that such a person is not in a condition to pray, “Forgive ...” At that moment he will be able to obtain neither forgiveness and its resultant comfort, nor all that is implied in forgiveness (as stated above). This also applies when there is hatred and vengefulness in the heart, for *a greater or lesser measure of sin does not change the*

nature of the sin. If anyone is to pray, then his heart must not condemn him. “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:20-21). When a person perceives that he harbors a grudge, hatred, and aversion toward his neighbor who has done him wrong, he (if he has spiritual life) will not dare to pray for forgiveness. He must condemn himself; he neither dares nor can expect any forgiveness. This is also true when he becomes aware that he is guilty of wrongdoing toward someone else with whom he is not yet reconciled (Matt 5:23-24). When he is reconciled with his neighbor, however, and forgives whomever has offended him, he can approach boldly in prayer, and in faith request and expect forgiveness. The Lord Jesus conveys this when He restates this petition: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:14-15). He will then neither grant you the comforting sense of the forgiveness of sins nor will He say to you, “Be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy salvation.” He will neither grant you free access to Himself nor permit you to have communion in peace with Him. This is signified by the phrase “... as we forgive ...”

Debtors are not those persons who are indebted to us as far as money or possessions are concerned. It is not implied here that we are not permitted to demand payment according to the rule of justice—even though such is not to be done with sharpness and cruelty toward an impotent debtor. Rather, debtors are those who have done wrong toward us in word or deed.

Human Forgiveness vs. Divine Forgiveness

To forgive is not to forgive as God forgives, that is, with authority and majesty. It also does not relate to the measure in which one has done wrong toward God and is punishable for at God’s bar. This is solely God’s doing. Such human forgiveness would have no value before God. No one should comfort himself in the hour of death with the fact that he will now be saved since he has forgiven others and has been forgiven by his adversary—and is thus reconciled with his neighbor. Rather, this forgiveness is only applicable to those wrongdoings which have been committed against each other. This does not mean that by the wrongdoing of our neighbor we have become his judge or have the authority to punish him; most certainly not. Rather, forgiveness occurs between equals who, even though they have been wronged, may not punish. Yes, no one

is permitted to be wrathful toward the offender, allow the inclination toward vengeance to arise in the heart, nor have a grudge against, hate, or have an aversion toward him. It is thus not a virtue if you put aside anger, wrath, and hatred toward your neighbor. To be thus disposed is not a voluntary matter as if it were a matter of choice whether or not we would be thus minded. Instead, it is but a desisting from sin. Therefore, we are not to be of the opinion that we have done something significant toward our neighbor if we are no longer angry at him and neither punish nor intend to punish him. Forgiveness is a declaration to the offender proceeding from the heart of a offended party that he entertains neither hatred, aversion, nor wrath in his heart toward him, and that he will not inflict evil upon him due to his offense, but rather is inclined to live in peace and love with him. Such an expression of the disposition of the heart does not always occur; rather it only occurs when the offender confesses his guilt and seeks forgiveness and reconciliation. This is evident in Luke 17:3-4: "If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." To say, "I forgive you" when such is not warranted is a triumphant boasting of your kindness and will harden the offender in his sin.

All of this is implied when we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

The Lord Jesus has suffered once and for all for the sins of all who are His. This He did once when He sacrificed Himself, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14), and thus obtained eternal redemption for them. Even though forgiveness by virtue of the death of Christ is indeed a reality, man himself is nevertheless nothing but sin within and without, dead in sins, and is thus by nature a child of wrath as all other men. He is condemnable and in a condition in which a holy God cannot find delight. Instead, God hates the state of sin and divine justice should execute judgment upon it. In such a condition he is not an object of forgiveness. However, the Lord grants His elect spiritual light and life—each at his own time. He then begins to perceive in what state he is by nature, is fearful, and is perplexed about his sinful and condemnable state. He perceives that his salvation consists in being in a reconciled state with God, in having peace with God, in approaching boldly unto God as being reconciled with Him, and in walking humbly with God as his Father in filial obedience and love. He is very desirous to be delivered from the one and to obtain the other. He looks unto the

Surety, receives Him, and supplicates for forgiveness. The Lord, in response to this, grants him this, applies the atonement to him, and causes him to taste the fruits of atonement and forgiveness. For the one this is more clear and for the other more obscure. Since the believer daily offends in many things, his faith in the forgiveness of sins is weakened—it generally being very feeble anyway—and fear and anxiety resurface. The desire for that state which gives peace again returns, and thus he resumes the exercise of faith and his praying for forgiveness. Observe this in the example of the holy man David, the man after God’s own heart: “Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Ps 19:12); “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions ... for Thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Ps 25:7, 11); “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps 51:1-2).

A Serious Warning Addressed to the Unconverted

The unconverted cannot pray this petition. When they rattle it off—as they do daily—they are mocking with God, for they are not sincere in their heart and will, except they repent, experience to their terror that God will not allow Himself to be mocked, and that they are also not able to deceive Him.

Therefore, 1) you who are still insensitive about your sinful state—about your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds—who do not fear the wrath of God and carelessly go on your way; 2) you who have no intention to depart from all, I repeat, all sin (What do I say? You are not acquainted with sin except for three or four grievous ones, and how would you thus depart from them); 3) you who do not know what it means to be reconciled with God, to have peace with God, to freely make use of access to God, to have fellowship with God in a filial disposition, and who are neither restless about your defect nor desirous for this delightful experience; and 4) you who live in envy, hatred, and are continually permeated with a desire for vengeance, this desire manifesting itself whenever there is an opportunity; oh, that you would be conscious of this your disposition!

First, be assured that as often as you recite this petition (for it cannot be called prayer) you are provoking God, indeed defying God to punish you. When God’s longsuffering toward you will have come to an end, you will know what it means to have recited this petition without the heart and under the pretense of prayer.

Secondly, you are living and continue to live in an unreconciled state, laden with guilt and subject to the unbearable wrath of God. When this will once be poured out upon you, where will you then flee? Then it will be fearful for you to fall into the hands of the living God.

Thirdly, you will not avoid the punishment, for if God has punished His own Son for the sins of His elect, what must you expect? Therefore, repent and seek to be delivered from your guilt and punishment through the blood of Jesus Christ, and with an upright heart pray for forgiveness.

Counsel for Those Who Desire to Be Reconciled and Be at Peace with God

You who desire to live continually in a state of reconciliation and peace and experience that your faith in the forgiveness of sins is faint and feeble—who have but little assurance, who rarely or never have a sense of forgiveness, and whose conscience is repeatedly troubled by committed sins, which inhibit you in your approach unto God, make you discouraged, and therefore obstruct you in your seeking to be in a reconciled state—come, earnestly endeavor to have a grievous sense of your sins, to become a partaker of forgiveness, and to live in a state of peace. The Lord Jesus has afforded us the means by teaching us to pray, “Forgive us our debts.” We may indeed be at liberty to pray for that which the Lord puts in our mouth.

First, our need must compel us to do so—for how dreadful it is to be subject to the wrath of God, to be accursed, to be under the power of the devil, to be under the dominion of sin, and to be subject to the punishment of eternal condemnation! How unbearable it is when God gives man but a glimpse of this! Such is the state in which all the unconverted are. Oh, that they would take it to heart and believe it; that the terror of the Lord would persuade them to seek earnestly for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God by the blood of the Lord Jesus! Therefore in a heartfelt manner pray, “Forgive!” Even though the converted are reconciled with God, if they presently do not know this, it is for them personally as if they had no forgiveness; then it seems to them as if they are still subject to the judgments mentioned. This must therefore stir them (since they are much easier to be persuaded) to seek forgiveness. What a mournful and anxious life it is to live always in fear of death and condemnation, always to live with an anxious conscience, time and again to be troubled when thinking upon God, and always to be a prisoner to the power of

corruption, for the one is contingent upon the other! Then each perplexing circumstance is perceived as a sign of God's wrath, whatever we undertake is considered to be accursed, and no delight can be found in either our food and drink, family and home, the starry sky, the delightful countenance of the earth, or friends. All this is a consequence of sin. Therefore, seek the forgiveness of sins and it shall all be removed.

Secondly, neither allow the magnitude of your sins, nor the fact that you sin repeatedly discourage you from praying for the forgiveness of sins. Do not say with Cain: "My sin is greater than that it should be forgiven. My prayer is but mockery with God, for upon having earnestly prayed for the forgiveness of sins, I immediately sin again; I no longer dare to pray for forgiveness." Where then do you wish to turn? Do you wish to remain in this wretched condition? Do you know of a different way? You must have forgiveness, and therefore you must pray for it. It does not help you to say, "I do not dare." Therefore, turn to the Lord against whom you have sinned. Confess your sins before Him, humble yourself before Him, and pray for forgiveness, for our God is not harsh and unyielding. Rather, He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod 34:6). The Lord delights in doing well, forgiving sin, and answering prayer. Let the following text afford you boldness: "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Ps 86:5). Add to this Jer 32:41: "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good." Yes, the Lord yearns to see if someone comes to Him who is desirous for grace: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa 30:18). Are your sins many? There is also much forgiveness with the Lord: "He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). Do you sin each day again? Then consider Lam 3:22-23: "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." Who would then not have freedom to go to such a good God and to supplicate Him to be gracious? Since the Lord Jesus has satisfied the justice of God, is a merciful and compassionate High Priest to apply His merits to all who come to Him to become partakers of His atonement, and to pray for them, there is all the more reason to do so. Therefore, you who are perplexed, at your wits' end, sorrowful, and overwhelmed—receive this Surety, and through Him and with His merits go to the Father, praying, "Forgive our debts."

Thirdly, it is a most delightful condition to have the forgiveness of sins. Believers, however feeble you may be and however far you may have strayed away, you have not yet forgotten what it was like

to be freed from all debt and all punishment—what it was like to have free access to God and to say with a filial heart, “My Father”—what it was like to have a quiet soul, to taste peace with God which passes all understanding, to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, to be a partaker of Christ’s ransom and righteousness and to be clothed with it. Do you not remember how your heart was enlarged and that it seemed as if all that is in heaven and upon earth was reconciled with you when the Lord said to you, “Thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy God and thou art Mine”? You are indeed acquainted with this condition, be it sensibly or by faith. Your soul is troubled when you are not in such a condition, and it is the intense desire of your heart to be in such a state and to be led further and further in the enjoyment of such a frame. Would this not move you to seek forgiveness with God if you are without it, and to flee to the Lord Jesus if you have lost it, and thus be restored in a disposition where you are at peace? And you who are in such a state, preserve it most carefully, for it is so readily disturbed by either a serious falling into sin or a reckless yielding to sin. Furthermore, this will be the case when you fail to make continual use of the Lord Jesus, when you fail to arise and wash yourself by renewal in Christ’s blood after you fall, and by renewal to walk humbly before the countenance of God, thus acquainting yourself with the Lord. Then, I say that you will readily lose this sweet frame. Therefore, pray daily, “Forgive!”

Fourthly, if there is but the least principle of faith and life in you, you will be desirous for sanctification. It will be your intention to be on guard against a given sin, to do such and such, and you will make an effort to do so. Yet, there is no progress, for you fall again and your expectation is shattered. You will deny your spiritual state, for such a life cannot coexist with grace. In one word, you will become discouraged and will despair, and you would desist in this endeavor if the Lord would not time and again intervene. Then a renewed effort will be made; however, the outcome will be the same. You will thus live in anxiety, and if any progress is made in this manner, it is at best but natural work and the conscience remains restless.

If, however, you desire to be more holy, you must begin with the forgiveness of sins. If, by faith, you may receive the Surety Jesus Christ, and as such come to God and receive the forgiveness of all your sins, then the separation between God and the soul is removed and you will exercise communion with God. The soul will love God and will find such delight in fellowship with God that she would not readily like to lose this. Since she knows that this

fellowship is disrupted by sin, she will be all the more on her guard against it. Since the forgiveness of sins stirs up love in her, this love will cause her to fear and obey God in a filial manner, and do whatever is pleasing to the Lord. Thus, the forgiveness of sins engenders sanctification. This is indicated by the following passages: "... purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9); "... faith which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6); "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps 130:4). By way of the forgiveness of sins the wounded soul is healed and this causes the believer to proceed with courage. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa 33:24). All these texts give expression to the necessity, sweetness, and efficacy of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore seek it with all your heart, for it can be obtained. Having obtained this, you will be enabled to sanctify the name of the Lord and, with David, to give thanks: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," etc. (Ps 103:2-3).

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

The Sixth Petition: And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil

A Christian desires to perform all that he prays for; that is, if it pertains to matters where his activity is appropriate. To pray without a desire to be active is mocking with God. To be active without prayer does not yield good results, since we are not capable of doing anything spiritual in and of ourselves.

In the first three petitions the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for three great matters: that God's Name be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done. As supplicants ourselves, we are involved in the execution of these matters. Therefore we cannot pray for them unless we are willing to effect them in our station in life. In order to be a means in effecting these matters, however, we must be in a condition in which we are fit according to soul and body to effect them. Since we ourselves are neither fit for this nor are able to acquire these qualifications in and of ourselves—God alone being able and willing to grant them—the Lord Jesus teaches us in the last three petitions, having presented in the *first* three petitions the matters which are to effected, to pray for the qualifications which are needed for the execution of these matters. To that end it is requisite that our bodies function and be in good condition—food and raiment being needful for that purpose. This we request in the *fourth* petition: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Furthermore, in order that the *first* three matters be effected it is also requisite that we be in a reconciled state with God and be at peace with Him, for God does not deem His enemies worthy of effecting such great matters. Moreover, man can neither approach unto God in an unreconciled state, have fellowship with

Him, nor do anything for the Lord. His consciousness of sin would cause him to be fearful of God and prompt him to flee from Him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus taught in the *fifth* petition to pray to be in a state of reconciliation and peace with God: “Forgive us our debts.” Since spiritual life is feeble, faith is weak, and the soul has but little strength; since it has pleased the Lord, to a greater or lesser degree, to give his enemies free reign against him; and since those enemies are shrewd, evil, tireless, and powerful, a believer is in fear that the enemies would hinder him in the execution of those matters which he so greatly delights in, and render his heart incapable of doing anything spiritual—yes, lead him into sin. Therefore the supplicant flees to the Lord for help in order that he might be preserved in a state of holiness and thus be fit to effect these three great matters. The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for this in the *sixth* petition: “Lead us not into temptation,” etc.

The Twofold Nature of This Petition

In these words we do not find two petitions, but only one. There is but one subject with which we are exercised here and about which we utter a twofold petition. First of all, there is a petition for the preservation from evil, and *secondly*, a petition to be delivered from evil.

The petition to be kept from evil is expressed in these words: “And lead us not into temptation.” First of all we have the subject, *temptation*, and *secondly* the invocation, *lead us not into it*.

The last three petitions are all connected with the conjunction “and,” for a Christian is in need of all three dispositions in order both to pray the *first* three petitions as well as to effect them. If one of these dispositions is lacking, he will not be fit to do so. All three must always coalesce.

The Subject of This Petition: Temptation

The subject is temptation. The Greek word *πειραζειν* (*peirazein*) signifies trial. “And this He said to prove him” (John 6:6); “Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles” (Rev 2:2). It also signifies “to examine”: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor 13:5). Most often it signifies “to tempt”: “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). From this word the word *πειρασμος* (*peirasmos* = temptation) is derived, which is used here. Temptation can originate with 1) God, 2) man, 3) the world, and 4) the devil.

God Tempts

God is said to tempt or prove man. God tempted Abraham when

He commanded him to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:1); He proved Israel with the manna (Exod 16:4); and He tried David (2 Sam 24:1) and Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:31). It is not as if God would thus become acquainted with certain matters or outcomes, for all things are naked and opened before Him and He knows man's thoughts from afar. Rather, He does so to make matters known to either the person himself or to others—thus conveying what good or evil is to be found in man. It was thus that Job's patience, Abraham's obedience, David's weakness, and Hezekiah's pride became manifest, to their humiliation, the comfort of others, and to prompt others to caution. God proves His own by either temporal prosperity or adversity in order to ascertain whether He is all-sufficient to them and their only confidence; whether they believe the providence of God in each individual matter; whether they love His will; or whether they have the courage to put their trust in His promises. The Lord also tries His own with spiritual temptations by the withdrawal of His Spirit, light, comfort, and opportunities, in order to cause them to live by faith alone—in reliance upon His Word—and continually receive Him as their strength.

Man the Tempter

Man tempts God, other men, and himself.

(1) Man tempts God if we limit Him as far as time, manner, and measure are concerned, dictating to Him how and in what manner matters are to transpire: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps 78:41). We limit Him when we are not satisfied with His common way of providence, but instead require a miracle from God, something extraordinary, above and beyond the course of nature. "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness" (Ps 78:19); "The children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat" (Num 11:4). Thus, the Jews tempted Christ: "Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt 12:38-39). This also occurs when we set up certain conditions before we shall believe—if we insist on a certain measure of contrition, illumination, sanctification, or assurance. Thomas did this: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). This is a dreadful sin. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut 6:16); "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Cor 10:9). This does not apply to a meditating

upon the wonders which God has done of old in order to strengthen us in great distress by reflecting upon God's omnipotence and faithful care for His own, and thus in a more lively sense to submit to that which pleases the Lord.

(2) Man proves *other men* by convincing them of their sinful state and thus to lead them to conversion and to Christ. In this respect the elders prove the members: "Do not ye judge them that are within" (1 Cor 5:12). Or, we can tempt other men to commit evil by leading them into situations in order to cause them to fall, and bring them to sin and shame. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink ... and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab 2:15). We furthermore do so when we draw our neighbor out in order to get him to speak so that we may thus catch him in his words. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25); "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not" (Matt 22:15, 17). Such will praise a person, show him great friendship, or urge him to be valiant—all of this, however, to cause him to stumble.

(3) Man proves *himself* positively when he considers whether or not he possesses grace in truth. The apostle commands this: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor 13:5). Such, in order not to deceive themselves, pray that the Lord would uncover them: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24). Man can also tempt himself toward evil when he carelessly brings himself into circumstances which could have been avoided, and of which we know that they have generally caused us to sin; when we yield to minor sins; when we entertain idle thoughts; when we postpone the performance of a specific duty; and when we debate about a sin as to whether or not we are permitted to do this, or whether such and such is indeed a great sin. James speaks of this tempting of self: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14).

The World as Tempter

The *world* tempts converted and unconverted alike to commit sin. It does so by holding before them all manner of entertainment; by promising advantage and profit, as well as friendship,

love, esteem, and honor. If that does not succeed, it will threaten with evil, harm, shame, persecution, etc. Even though one worldly person will tempt another worldly person to sin, the church in general, and each believer individually, are its primary focus. The latter are to view themselves as sheep among the wolves. They are therefore not to trust anyone, but must always be on their guard when they are among worldly people. The Lord Jesus foretold them that they have nothing but evil to expect from the world and worldly people. “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). The Lord Jesus also teaches them that they are to be on their guard: “But beware of men” (Matt 10:17). We read furthermore: “Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Pet 3:17). To that end the Lord Jesus gave this golden counsel: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt 10:16).

The Devil as Tempter

The *devil* also tempts man. The unconverted are in his power; he rules over them and they are captive under him at his will. He exerts all his power to cause believers to fall by way of temptations, however, and he consequently also bears the name of *tempter* (Matt 4:3), *the enemy* (Matt 13:39), *the adversary* (1 Pet 5:8), and *the devil* (James 4:7). His temptations are most subtle, and they are therefore referred to as “the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). He searches out where and when the believer is weak, and he adjusts himself accordingly to present his temptations, then in this and then in that manner. To advance all his temptations at once would not be possible and would not be effective with many. He knows the constitution of the body as well as its vulnerability; he knows the sin most likely to be committed, and he knows in what circumstances we must at all times be to do so. Along with this he interjects thoughts and mental images in our imagination whereby he endeavors to make us think about such thoughts, stimulating our lusts by such reflections. As much as he is permitted, he will create situations in which he knows that we have frequently fallen. Then when the soul is troubled about falling into sin, he tries to seduce her from one sin to the next. He knows how to camouflage sin in such a subtle manner, or presents it as being so desirable that our lusts are stirred up. At the very outset he stirs man up and urges him to make haste—to make haste so that man will not have time to direct one thought toward God. Once the sin has been committed, he tries to bring this person to despair, by suggesting:

“Such a life cannot coexist with grace; you are not born again; you do not have true faith; for you there is no grace; your sin is too great; you have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.” Subsequent to this he will terrify them in a variety of ways. For a more comprehensive treatment of the temptations of the devil we refer you to a later section in this chapter entitled: “The assaults of the devil.”

This we must know, however: the devil can neither compel nor cause man to sin. All he can do is to suggest, entice, and create situations. Thus, man himself is the cause of those sins which he commits, and may therefore not blame the devil. Furthermore, the devil is not always the instigator; rather, man himself is generally the initiator.

The Request Relative to Temptation

Thus far we have seen what temptation is. Now we are to consider what activity is being requested relative to this subject, namely, temptation: “Lead us not into temptation.” We hereby supplicate that God our Father would not do so. God leads His children, to and in the way of salvation—without which they would never obtain salvation. “And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known” (Isa 42:16); “I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go” (Isa 48:17). The Lord Jesus is called their *captain* (Heb 2:10; 12:2). Believers pray that they may be led by the Lord: “Lead me in Thy truth” (Ps 25:5); “Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness” (Ps 143:10). For on the one side they know their weakness, and the deviousness, wickedness, and violence of the enemies; and on the other side they know the Lord’s power and goodness. They pray that the Lord would illuminate them, continually show them the way, exhort and stir them up to enter upon that way, support and govern them by His power, and not forsake them until they have reached their goal. They pray that they may be led in such a way. However, the invocation relates to not being led into temptation.

The Lord our God is holy and whatever He does is holy: “His work is honourable and glorious” (Ps 111:3). All that He executes is righteous: “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (Rev 16:7). All that is unrighteous is far removed from God. There is no unrighteousness in Him. Let no one accuse God when he is tempted to evil and falls as a result of this. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13). God Himself does neither

tempt anyone with evil nor to commit evil. When God tempts someone, this always occurs in an incomprehensible and holy manner—with holy purposes or thereby to manifest His righteousness and goodness, and thus to the glory of His Name, before angels and men, they being witnesses of those deeds.

Trials Sent by God are of a holy Nature

God tries both the ungodly and godly in a holy manner. He tries the ungodly:

(1) When He withdraws His gifts which have been abused, such as common illumination, conviction, and His restraining influence. “But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul” (1 Sam 16:14).

(2) When He, as righteous Judge, gives man—who is nothing but sin, desires to do nothing but sin, and cannot do anything but sin—over to himself, the consequence of being unwilling to hear Him. “So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Ps 81:12).

(3) When He gives a man over to the devil so that he governs this man according to his will: “... who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Tim 2:26).

(4) When man—while being subject to these judgments and due to continual sinning and a continual going against his conscience—is hardened so that he becomes insensitive to sin and a fear for punishment. This judgment God executed upon Pharaoh: “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (Exod 7:3). A man who is in such a condition and in whom God permits all manner of inclinations to arise, will fall into every sin until the righteous wrath of God destroys him.

God tries His children with a holy objective and in a holy manner. This occurs:

(1) When the Lord gives free reign to the tempters—be it the devil, the world, or the flesh—to assault His children in various ways. It was thus that God gave the devil free reign with Job (even though there were limitations) (Job 1-2), as well as with David (2 Sam 24:1).

(2) When God withholds His gracious influence and sustaining power—of which the church complained: “O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear” (Isa 63:17). When a child of God is thus deprived of God’s help, and is thus assaulted by his enemies—and if both grace and spiritual life are but feeble—he is in danger indeed!

(3) When God permits certain situations to arise in which he should have remained standing, and he is then not on his guard. If his emotions and lusts are stirred up, and he then departs from the

fear of God, obedience, and the love of God, he will be tossed about as a top, and be led about by his flesh, being swept along from the one sin to the next (even to sins toward which he had no natural inclination beforehand). What a tragic situation this is! What would be the end if God were not to deal with him again and restore him? A child of God must be fearful of such a condition and pray against it.

What is Implied When the Godly Pray: "Lead Us Not into Temptation"

When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are not praying for the averting of all temptations or trials resulting from a spiritual or physical cross, or from all circumstances in which we would be able to fall. This is God's way with all His children whereby He humbles them, exercises them in the battle against the enemies, and sanctifies them. Rather, the petition is as follows: "Neither let the temptation get a hold of nor have power over us; do not withdraw Thy Holy Spirit from us; do not give us over to ourselves when opportunities for sin manifest themselves. When the enemies assault us and seek to toss us to and fro and sift us as wheat, let us then not be overpowered by the temptation. Do not let us be ensnared so that unrighteousness would gain the upper hand; neither give us over to evil inclinations nor to the lusts of our corrupt heart. For where would this not bring us? If, however, it pleases Thee to let situations arise and that snares are laid for us everywhere, and if devils and worldly people in a subtle or evil way scheme to catch us, keep us from falling and lead us by Thy Spirit. Give us strength to remain standing, so that by our fall our own soul be not mortally wounded, the godly be neither grieved nor offended, and Thy Name and true godliness be not blasphemed." Such was David's prayer: "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee" (Ps 25:20-21); "O forsake me not utterly" (Ps 119:8); "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel" (Ps 69:6).

Thus, the petition not to be led into temptation is indicative of:

- (1) a knowledge and an acknowledgment of the sinfulness of our heart and our weakness to resist temptations;
- (2) a hatred and an aversion for sin and a fear for falling into sin;
- (3) a love for communion with God, which is affected and obscured by a falling into sin; as well as a love for the honor of God's Name, the reputation of godliness, and the joy of the godly;
- (4) faith in God's care for His own, and in God's omnipotence

to give them strength to subdue the enemies in their assaults; as well as faith in the goodness of God as rendering Him willing to do this, and His veracity that He will do it, having promised to hear and answer prayer.

The Second Part of the Petition: But Deliver us from Evil

The first portion of this petition having been dealt with, *the preservation from evil*, we shall now consider the *second* part, the deliverance from evil. The *first* part relates to the future, whereas the *second* part relates to the present. These two portions of the petitions are conjoined by the adversative “but.” From this it is evident that the latter differs from the *first*, but nevertheless is related to the *first*. The manner in which there is a distinction and relationship is contingent upon the interpretation of the word “evil”—that is, how this is to be understood. “Evil” (ἄδικία *poneros*) signifies the devil: “... then cometh the wicked one ... the tares are the children of the wicked one” (Matt 13:19, 38). *The world* is referred to as *evil*: “... this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), which is said to lie in wickedness, that is, to be entirely evil: “... and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). *The heart of man* is said to be evil: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb 3:12). This evil heart is filled with wickedness: “An evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matt 12:35). In the heart of the natural man there is nothing but wickedness: “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Also, *sinis* referred to as that which is evil: “Abhor that which is evil” (Rom 12:9). Since these four—the devil, the world, the heart of man, and sin—are called evil, the question is who or what is to be understood by “evil” here.

The Word “Evil” Defined

The supplicant is a child of God who addresses God as Father and greatly desires the glorification of God’s Name, the well-being and extension of God’s kingdom, and the doing of God’s will. To that end he requests temporal support for himself and all the godly, so that, due to poverty, they would not be a reason for slander to the ungodly and they themselves would not be overcome by cares. He prays to continually be in a state of peace and reconciliation in order that they may run their course with joy and liberty before God and man. Furthermore he prays that they would not encounter any snares or stumbling blocks whereby they could be ensnared or over which they would fall. To that end he prays that they may be delivered from all that would hinder them in the way of godliness. It is all this which is here denominated as *evil*. By

the word “evil” must primarily and preeminently be understood, not the devil, for then both portions of this petition would almost be identical, but our sinful nature, the sins which easily beset us, the law of sin which is in our members, and *sin* with all its manifestations. Thus, both the contradistinction with and the relationship to the *first* portion of this petition is clear. As long as sin has much power in man, the least temptation causes him to fall; however, when the image of God has been more restored, Christ has been formed in the soul, and the heart has increased in desire, life, and holiness, man will remain standing in temptation that much better. Furthermore, what would it profit man if he would not encounter any temptations at all and would in the meantime continue in his sinful disposition? The supplicant abhors the monster of sin, cannot tolerate it, but requests to be delivered from it. Also, the Greek word ρ(υ~σαι (*rusai*) yields further emphasis. The Greek have several words whereby they express deliverance, and the word which they use here means “to extract,” or “to deliver by way of extraction.” Sin must be extracted: “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee” (Matt 18:9); “... in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11). (Extracting is implied here even though the vocabulary differs.) We thus pray: “Deliver us from the sinful disposition of heart and its sinful manifestations.” This is not contradicted by the fact that there is an article here: του~ πονηρου~ (*tou ponerou*)—as if this were to refer to a person and thus to the devil. For this article is also used with the word “sin”: “The whole world lieth (ε0ν τω~| πονηρω~|) in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). We consider the most correct view to be that του~ πονηρου~ is *neuter* rather than *masculine*, and that in this instance the word “evil” includes both sin and all that is evil. The meaning of this petition is therefore: Keep us in the future so that we shall not succumb to the power of temptation and be caused to fall thereby. Furthermore, deliver us from this present sinful disposition of soul and the sins which issue forth therefrom.

An Unconverted Person Is not Able to Pray this Petition

As an unconverted person cannot pray any petition since he has no desire for any of these, he likewise also cannot pray this petition. This is all the more true since he can be most clearly convinced that not only is he without desire for the matters comprehended in this petition, but that it is all his desire and delight to live in sin. He does not want sin to be extracted from him. Instead, he draws unrighteousness to himself with the cords of vanity, and sin as with heavy wagon ropes. He has no fear that

he will fall into temptation; he even seeks it out and eagerly involves himself in it, for sinning is his delight—as long as it does not result in harm or injury. When such a person therefore says to God. “Lead us not,” etc. ..., then he lies in the presence of an omniscient God and mocks Him. For if he would truly express what is in his heart, he would say: “Grant me opportunities to engage in many delightful and expedient sins, for they are my delight.” Such a person ought no longer to pray this petition to God, lest he tempt Him. Instead, he ought either to continue without prayer to his destruction, or else repent and then offer the petition, “Lead us not into temptation!”

The Godly are Not Always in a Frame to Pray This Petition

A godly person also is not always in a frame to pray this petition. In order to have liberty, he must always regain his composure and modify his behavior when he intends to pray. Thus he must specifically turn within before he prays this petition, and examine himself as to whether his heart cleaves to a given sin—whether there is a sin which presently holds him captive, he is not forsaking, and he is not valiantly resisting so that he may desist from and strive against it. If someone is in such a condition, he will have no liberty to approach to God, for his heart condemns him. It is thus essential that we are fully opposed to sin in general as well as to such and such a specific sin which torments us most—even though we have no strength against it and we are able to deduce from our disposition as well as from experience, that we can fall into this again unless we receive further strength from above. For then are we able to ask for help and pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

This Petition Must be Prayed in All Earnestness

This petition therefore ought to be most earnestly prayed by us, for:

(1) If we are no partakers of this disposition and these matters, we are not even capable of praying the other petitions—much less do them. However, upon having received what we petition for here, we shall be fit for everything. As the *first* petition is the objective of all things, so is this petition the disposition from which and whereby we must strive to attain that objective—as well as render the use of the means profitable.

(2) Furthermore, how dreadful is sin! It is a breach of the binding obligation which the Lord has imposed upon man—an obligation which man himself readily acknowledges. To sin is to be disobedient to the majestic Lord and to despise His awe-inspiring character, doing so in His presence and while He observes it. We commit

sins from which we would be kept by the presence of a man—yes, even a child. Indeed, it is an act of utter contempt toward God when we are neither concerned about His wrath nor His judgments. Is anything more dreadful imaginable?

(3) Sin deforms the soul, and makes her despicable, hateful, and abominable—more than we can even think or express.

(4) And what sorrows it engenders! God withdraws Himself and leaves the person over to himself. His precious soul is tossed about day and night due to loss of freedom, instability, fear, anxiety, and restlessness.

(5) The one sin begets the other, and those in turn beget others—and where would sinning end?

(6) Sinning does not merely consist in the committing of transitory evil thoughts, words, and deeds, but it injures spiritual life itself. It becomes more feeble and weaker, and a person becomes less fit to live godly and to turn from sin. You know all this, believers. Ought you therefore not to be fearful and anxious about sin, and knowing your impotence, ought it not to cause you to cry out to the Lord, “Deliver me from evil! Deliver me; wash me; sanctify me, oh sanctify me, for I must be holy as Thou art”?

The Bitterness of Succumbing to the Power of Temptation

To succumb to the power of temptation is the most bitter thing that can befall a godly person. When a godly person, who already has but little strength, succumbs to a sinful frame, yields to sin more than he commonly does, and is thoughtless, careless, and shoddy in his conduct, he is in a frame which renders him vulnerable to temptations. When the tempter is then permitted by God to assault such a person and employ his wickedness, subtleties, devices, and practices; when the opportunities are there for this person to be wrathful, proud, unrighteous, impure, and to deny his confession either due to fear, lust, or whatever else; and if God departs from him, deserts him, and leaves him over to himself, his lusts will become lively and vehement and toss him about as dust in a whirlwind. This cannot be resisted, for both intellect and judgment have no say in this; his burning lusts are in control. Even if spiritual life manifests itself in some measure and counsels and groans against this—even then things nevertheless proceed as if he were without his senses. The running horses cannot be held back. What all can a man not be led into? It can lead him into things for which he had no desire his entire life—yes, which he abhorred.

When man falls due to temptation, it is frequently not limited to one fall. And even if he wishes to refrain and regain previous

tenderness, there is no strength. God hides Himself, temptations are renewed, lusts stir by renewal, and he is overcome once more—until the Lord visits him by renewal and draws him out of this. However, the previous tenderness of heart, the enjoyment of peace, communion with God, and a shining forth with holiness are still far removed. Sorrow, tears, anxiety, prayer, wrestling, a following hard after the Lord, and a renewed stumbling are the order of the day. Who would not be fearful of such a condition? Therefore, pray continually, “Lead us not into temptation!”

The Motivation for This Petition

The praying of this petition issues forth from a hatred and aversion for sin, from the experience of our inability to remain standing, and out of love for a pure and unspotted life. If this motivates us to pray thus, it must also render us active to remain in that condition. Temptations, when they come, will have no effect upon such when they come. Such have a perfect heart which longs for nothing else but continual union and fellowship with God. The world, and all that appears to be attractive and delightful in the world, must be banished from the heart, and the Lord alone must be all-sufficient to us—and must be the object of our joy, delight, love, and fear. Even if we cannot carry this out according to our wishes, we must always seek to preserve the choice, the intention, and the exercises. If we do not proceed in this from the heart, in all our doing no progress will be made; we shall be vulnerable to temptations and the most insignificant occasion will cause us to fall. If, however, the heart is perfect toward the Lord, and we conduct ourselves in the presence of God, then we will be strengthened against temptations. “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18).

Prayer and Work Must Also be Combined

Prayer and work must be combined; a Christian desires to perform what he prays for, and endeavors to do as much as he is able. When he prays, “Lead us not into temptation,” then he must refrain from leading himself into temptation. We lead ourselves into temptation,

(1) when we do not flee those circumstances in which we have frequently fallen, but rather seek them out, or, upon their occurrence consciously yield to them, there being neither need nor obligation to avail ourselves of them. Such circumstances can vary greatly and may either pertain to someone’s disposition, calling or other situations. To some the company of given individuals is harmful, to others dining engagements, to others the use of ordinary

means, and for others at times solitude. We must flee from these things that can be avoided, or else we lead ourselves into temptation. If we cannot avoid those situations in which we have frequently fallen, being under obligation by divine commandment, we must be very much on our guard to keep our hearts diligently by bridling our tongue, yielding in specific cases, standing firm for God's cause, and arming ourselves with sincerity and caution. When we conduct ourselves in this way, the temptation will have less effect upon us.

(2) when we use lawful and ordinary things too frequently and thoughtlessly.

(3) when we cherish vain thoughts and find our delight in them—even if they pertain to natural matters.

(4) when upon having sinned, we do not immediately arise, but either through carelessness, discouragement, unbelief and rejection of our spiritual state—or else due to finding delight in sin—remain where we are, so that sin gains in strength.

(5) when we reflect upon thoughts which suddenly enter our mind—be it concerning a sin in which we find delight, unbecoming thoughts of God and divine things, or dreadful interjections. We shall thereby lose a good spiritual frame, and in an evil spiritual frame we are susceptible to temptation. Against all these a Christian must be watchful and strive, being active in faith: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt 26:41); “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:8-9).

Guarding Against Temptation

Do you wish to be protected against temptation?

First, give heed to your heart and the thoughts proceeding from it: “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov 4:23).

Secondly, place a watch before your eyes: “I made a covenant with mine eyes” (Job 31:1), and pray: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Ps 119:37).

Thirdly, close your ears to vain talk and backbiting: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor 15:33); “Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken” (Eccles 7:21).

Fourthly, give heed to your tongue; govern it carefully and circumspectly. “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle” (Ps 39:1). Also pray: “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Ps 141:3). If you do not give heed to your heart and

your external senses, you will continually succumb to temptation. If, however, you are thus on your guard and if you walk carefully, then, while praying and striving, you will walk surely, conquer the enemies, and inherit the crown of life.

The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer

The third division of this prayer is its *conclusion*. “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.” The papists and some others omit this and contest it. However, the sacred text itself, the practice of the *first* church and of generations following, as well as similar expressions in other texts of the divine Scriptures ought to convince them and confirm us in our usage of them.

(1) We can view this conclusion as the basis upon which the supplicant has received liberty and upon which he leans; for God, his Father, has command over all creatures, is omnipotent to give the supplicant what he desires, and is glorious and majestic in His Being—it being the supplicant’s objective to magnify Him.

(2) We can view this conclusion as a motive toward prayer. It is common with prayers recorded in Scripture that motives are used whereby the supplicant quickens and spiritualizes his desires. He is thus supplicating God to grant him the matters which he desires—since He is ruler over all and can do everything by His power—and that the receipt of the desired matters would be to the glorification of His Name, He being worthy of this. Or: “We have prayed this for the church, the kingdom of grace; this is Thine and therein Thou dost desire to be glorified. Therefore hear our prayer!”

(3) It can also be viewed as an enlargement of and an urgent plea related to the last petition that God would not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for He has all authority and power over both the tempters and the ones being tempted. He is thus able to sustain the latter by His omnipotence, to restrain the tempters, and to grant the tempted one a steadfast and holy heart. However, this is not to be limited to the last petition only, but is applicable to this prayer in its entirety.

Thine is the kingdom. This is indicative of God’s majesty, ἐξουσιᾶ (*exousia*), authority, and dominion over everything, all of which is immediately subject to Him. This is most gloriously expressed by king David: “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is

power and might” (1 Chron 29:11-12). God has sovereign dominion over both the kingdom of power and of grace, and of glory.

“... and the power (δυναμις *dunamis*.)” God does not only have a just claim upon everything and authority over everything, but in the Lord there is also strength and power to rule over all that is His, protect His own, grant them their desires, punish the enemies, and execute whatever He wills. “I am the Almighty God” (Gen 17:1). The godly acknowledge this: “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Ps 115:3); “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20).

“... and the glory.” God is glory and majesty in Himself—even if there were neither heaven, nor earth, nor any creature. God’s glory is revealed in all His works, both in nature as well as in grace. The angels and the souls of the just made perfect praise and glorify Him as they witness His glory. However, in His goodness God has also willed that He be glorified upon earth. The unconverted neither are acquainted with the glory of God, nor do they have any desire to witness, praise, or magnify it. However, God has formed His people in order that they would show forth His praise; He has drawn them out of the power of darkness in order that they would show forth His praises. In all their activity they have God’s glory in view; it is their chief delight. “Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works” (Ps 145:2-5).

The supplicant says: “Thine is the kingdom; Thou art worthy that everything would glorify Thee.” Since true supplicants have this in view, they pray, expecting that God will hear their prayer.

“... forever!” The kingdom, the power, and the glory are the Lord’s from eternity to eternity; by Him there is neither change nor shadow of turning. He is always the same: always glorious, omnipotent, and majestic. The believers upon earth—from Adam until Christ’s coming to judgment, from generation to generation—declare: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:13).

The Meaning of the Word “Amen”

“...Amen.” This is a Hebrew word which means *truth*. Sometimes it is used singularly, and sometimes it is repeated: *Amen and*

Amen. At times it is used singularly and at times with an addition: *Amen, Hallelujah; Amen, Oh Lord; Amen, the Lord do thus.*

(1) Sometimes it is an approbation and a subscribing to what has been said. “And all the people shall answer and say, Amen” (Deut 27:15); “And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands” (Neh 8:6). This approbation indicates that we comprehend the matter, as well as that we wish and desire it. “Else ... how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest” (1 Cor 14:16).

(2) Sometimes it is expressive of a strong desire for a matter, and a desire that it be thus and come about as such: “That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers. ... Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord” (Jer 11:5).

(3) Sometimes it signifies veracity, certainty, and steadfastness—upon which one can rely and trust in. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen” (2 Cor 1:20).

The believing supplicant who has prayed everything with both his understanding and his heart, acknowledges the veracity and certainty of God’s promises, that He will hear prayer—and particularly this prayer: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24); “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (1 John 5:14-15). The supplicant has prayed with his heart, knows that the matters he has prayed for are according to God’s will, believes the goodness, omnipotence, and veracity of God, expects the fulfillment of his desire (subjecting himself to its time, manner, and measure), and longingly adds to this: “Amen, so be it; it shall most certainly be true.” “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen” (Rev 22:20).