

Monergism

**THE
APPLICATION
OF THE
WORK OF
REDEMPTION**

LOUIS BERKHOF

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I. Soteriology in General

A. CONNECTION BETWEEN SOTERIOLOGY AND THE PRECEDING LOCI.

SOTERIOLOGY deals with the communication of the blessings of salvation to the sinner and his restoration to divine favor and to a life in intimate communion with God. It presupposes knowledge of God as the all-sufficient source of the life, the strength, and the happiness of mankind, and of man's utter dependence on Him for the present and the future. Since it deals with restoration, redemption, and renewal, it can only be understood properly in the light of the original condition of man as created in the image of God, and of the subsequent disturbance of the proper relationship between man and his God by the entrance of sin into the world. Moreover, since it treats of the salvation of the sinner wholly as a work of God, known to Him from all eternity, it naturally carries our thoughts back to the eternal counsel of peace and the covenant of grace, in which provision was made for the redemption of fallen men. It proceeds on the assumption of the completed work of Christ as the Mediator of redemption. There is the closest possible connection between Christology and Soteriology. Some, as, for instance, Hodge, treat of both under the common heading "Soteriology." Christology then becomes objective, as distinguished from subjective, Soteriology. In defining the contents of Soteriology, it is better to say that it deals with the *application of the work of redemption* than to say that it treats of the *appropriation of salvation*. The matter should be studied theologically rather than anthropologically. The work of God rather than the work of man is definitely in the foreground. Pope objects to the use of the former term, since in using it "we are in danger of the predestinarian error

which assumes that the finished work of Christ is applied to the individual according to the fixed purpose of an election of grace.” This is the very reason why a Calvinist prefers to use that term. To do Pope justice, however, it should be added that he also objects to the other term, because it “tends to the other and Pelagian extreme, too obviously making the atoning provision of Christ a matter of individual free acceptance or rejection.” He prefers to speak of “*the administration of redemption*,” which is indeed a very good term. [*Christian Theology*, II, p. 319.]

B. THE *ORDO SALUTIS*, (ORDER OF SALVATION).

The Germans speak of “*Heilsaneignung*,” the Dutch, of “*Heilsweg*” and “*Orde des Heils*,” and the English, of the “*Way of Salvation*.” The *ordo salutis* describes the process by which the work of salvation, wrought in Christ, is subjectively realized in the hearts and lives of sinners. It aims at describing in their logical order, and also in their interrelations, the various movements of the Holy Spirit in the application of the work of redemption. The emphasis is not on what man does in appropriating the grace of God, but on what God does in applying it. It is but natural that Pelagians should object to this view.

The desire to simplify the *ordo salutis* often led to unwarranted limitations. Weizsaecker would include in it only the operations of the Holy Spirit wrought in the heart of man, and holds that neither calling nor justification can properly be included under this category.[Cf. McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, p. 368.] Kaftan, the most prominent Ritschlian dogmatician, is of the opinion that the traditional *ordo salutis* does not constitute an inner unity and therefore ought to be dissolved. He treats of calling under the Word as a means of grace; of regeneration, justification, and the mystical union, under the redemptive work of Christ; and relegates conversion and sanctification to the domain of Christian ethics. The

result is that only faith is left, and this constitutes the *ordo salutis*. [*Dogm.*, p. 651.] According to him the *ordo salutis* should include only what is required on the part of man unto salvation, and this is faith, *faith only*, — a purely anthropological point of view, which probably finds its explanation in the tremendous emphasis of Lutheran theology on active faith.

When we speak of an *ordo salutis*, we do not forget that the work of applying the grace of God to the individual sinner is a unitary process, but simply stress the fact that various movements can be distinguished in the process, that the work of the application of redemption proceeds in a definite and reasonable order, and that God does not impart the fulness of His salvation to the sinner in a single act. Had He done this, the work of redemption would not have come to the consciousness of God's children in all its aspects and in all its divine fulness. Neither do we lose sight of the fact that we often use the terms employed to describe the various movements in a more limited sense than the Bible does.

The question may be raised, whether the Bible ever indicates a definite *ordo salutis*. The answer to that question is that, while it does not explicitly furnish us with a complete order of salvation, it offers us a sufficient basis for such an order. The nearest approach found in Scripture to anything like an *ordo salutis*, is the statement of Paul in Rom. 8:29,30. Some of the Lutheran theologians based their enumeration of the various movements in the application of redemption rather artificially on Acts 26:17,18. But while the Bible does not give us a clear-cut *ordo salutis*, it does do two things which enable us to construe such an order. (1) It furnishes us with a very full and rich enumeration of the operations of the Holy Spirit in applying the work of Christ to individual sinners, and of the blessings of salvation imparted to them. In doing this, it does not always use the very terms employed in Dogmatics, but frequently resorts to the use of other names and to figures of speech. Moreover, it often employs terms which have now acquired a very definite technical meaning in Dogmatics, in a far wider sense. Such

words as *regeneration, calling, conversion, and renewal* repeatedly serve to designate the whole change that is brought about in the inner life of man. (2) It indicates in many passages and in various ways the relation in which the different movements in the work of redemption stand to each other. It teaches that we are justified by faith and not by works, Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16-20; that, being justified, we have peace with God and access to Him, Rom. 5:1,2; that we are set free from sin to become servants of righteousness, and to reap the fruit of sanctification, Rom. 6:18,22; that when we are adopted as children, we receive the Spirit who gives us assurance, and also become co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:4,5,6; that faith comes by the hearing of the word of God, Rom. 10:17; that death unto the law results in life unto God, Gal. 2:19,20; that when we believe, we are sealed with the Spirit of God, Eph. 1:13,14; that it is necessary to walk worthily of the calling with which we are called, Eph. 4:1,2; that having obtained the righteousness of God by faith, we share the sufferings of Christ, and also the power of His resurrection, Phil. 3:9,10; and that we are begotten again through the Word of God, I Pet. 1:23. These and similar passages indicate the relation of the various movements of the redemptive work to one another, and thus afford a basis for the construction of an *ordo salutis*.

In view of the fact that the Bible does not specify the exact order that applies in the application of the work of redemption, there is naturally considerable room for a difference of opinion. And as a matter of fact the Churches are not all agreed as to the *ordo salutis*. The doctrine of the order of salvation is a fruit of the Reformation. Hardly any semblance of it is found in the works of the Scholastics. In pre-Reformation theology scant justice is done to soteriology in general. It does not constitute a separate locus, and its constituent parts are discussed under other rubrics, more or less as *disjecta membra*. Even the greatest of the Schoolmen, such as Peter the Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, pass on at once from the discussion of the incarnation to that of the Church and the sacraments. What may be called their soteriology consists of only two chapters, *de*

Fide et de Poenitentia. The *bona opera* also receive considerable attention. Since Protestantism took its start from the criticism and displacement of the Roman Catholic conception of faith, repentance, and good works, it was but natural that the interest of the Reformers should center on the origin and development of the new life in Christ. Calvin was the first to group the various parts of the order of salvation in a systematic way, but even his representation, says Kuyper, is rather subjective, since it formally stresses the human activity rather than the divine.[*Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 17 f.] Later Reformed theologians corrected this defect. The following representations of the order of salvation reflect the fundamental conceptions of the way of salvation that characterize the various Churches since the Reformation.

1. THE REFORMED VIEW. Proceeding on the assumption that man's spiritual condition depends on his state, that is, on his relation to the law; and that it is only on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ that the sinner can be delivered from the corrupting and destructive influence of sin, — Reformed Soteriology takes its starting point in the union established in the *pactum salutis* between Christ and those whom the Father has given Him, in virtue of which there is an eternal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to those who are His. In view of this precedence of the legal over the moral some theologians, such as Maccovius, Comrie, A. Kuyper Sr., and A. Kuyper Jr., begin the *ordo salutis* with justification rather than regeneration. In doing this they apply the name "justification" also to the ideal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the elect in the eternal counsel of God. Dr. Kuyper further says that the Reformed differ from the Lutherans in that the former teach justification *per justitiam Christi*, while the latter represent the justification *per fidem* as completing the work of Christ.[*Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, p. 69.] The great majority of Reformed theologians, however, while presupposing the imputation of the righteousness of Christ in the *pactum salutis*, discuss only justification by faith in the order of salvation, and naturally take up its discussion in connection with or

immediately after that of faith. They begin the *ordo salutis* with regeneration or with calling, and thus emphasize the fact that the application of the redemptive work of Christ is in its incipiency a work of God. This is followed by a discussion of conversion, in which the work of regeneration penetrates to the conscious life of the sinner, and he turns from self, the world, and Satan, to God. Conversion includes repentance and faith, but because of its great importance the latter is generally treated separately. The discussion of faith naturally leads to that of justification, inasmuch as this is mediated to us by faith. And because justification places man in a new relation to God, which carries with it the gift of the Spirit of adoption, and which obliges man to a new obedience and also enables him to do the will of God from the heart, the work of sanctification next comes into consideration. Finally, the order of salvation is concluded with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and their final glorification.

Bavinck distinguishes three groups in the blessings of salvation. He starts out by saying that sin is guilt, pollution, and misery, for it involves a breaking of the covenant of works, a loss of the image of God, and a subjection to the power of corruption. Christ delivered us from these three by His suffering, His meeting the demands of the law, and His victory over death. Consequently, the blessings of Christ consist in the following: (a) He restores the right relation of man to God and to all creatures by justification, including the forgiveness of sins, the adoption of children, peace with God, and glorious liberty. (b) He renews man in the image of God by regeneration, internal calling, conversion, renewal, and sanctification. (c) He preserves man for his eternal inheritance, delivers him from suffering and death, and puts him in possession of eternal salvation by preservation, perseverance, and glorification. The first group of blessings is granted unto us by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, is accepted by faith, and sets our conscience free. The second is imparted to us by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, renews us, and redeems us from the power of sin. And the third flows to us by the preserving, guiding, and sealing work of the

Holy Spirit as the earnest of our complete redemption, and delivers us, body and soul, from the dominion of misery and death. The first group anoints us as prophets, the second, as priests, and the third, as kings. In connection with the first we look back to the completed work of Christ on the cross, where our sins were atoned; in connection with the second we look up to the living Lord in heaven, who as High Priest is seated at the right hand of the Father; and in connection with the third we look forward to the future coming of Jesus Christ, in which He will subject all enemies and will surrender the kingdom to the Father.

There are some things that should be borne in mind in connection with the *ordo salutis*, as it appears in Reformed theology.

a. Some of the terms are not always used in the same sense. The term *justification* is generally limited to what is called justification by faith, but is sometimes made to cover an objective justification of the elect in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them in the *pactum salutis*. Again, the word *regeneration*, which now generally designates that act of God by which He imparts the principle of the new life to man, is also used to designate the new birth or the first manifestation of the new life, and in the theology of the seventeenth century frequently occurs as synonymous with *conversion* or even *sanctification*. Some speak of it as *passive* conversion in distinction from conversion proper, which is then called *active* conversion.

b. Several other distinctions also deserve attention. We should carefully distinguish between the judicial and the recreative acts of God, the former (as justification) altering the state, and the latter (as regeneration, conversion), the condition of the sinner; — between the work of the Holy Spirit in the subconscious (regeneration), and that in the conscious life (conversion); — between that which pertains to the putting away of the old man (repentance, crucifying of the old man), and that which constitutes the putting on of the new man (regeneration and in part

sanctification); — and between the beginning of the application of the work of redemption (in regeneration and conversion proper), and the continuation of it (in daily conversion and sanctification).

c. In connection with the various movements in the work of application we should bear in mind that the judicial acts of God constitute the basis for His recreative acts, so that justification, though not temporally, is yet logically prior to all the rest; — that the work of God's grace in the subconscious, precedes that in the conscious life, so that regeneration precedes conversion; — and that the judicial acts of God (justification, including the forgiveness of sins and the adoption of children) always address themselves to the consciousness, while of the recreative acts one, namely, regeneration, takes place in the subconscious life.

2. THE LUTHERAN VIEW. The Lutherans, while not denying the doctrines of election, the mystical union, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, do not take their starting point in any one of these. They fully recognize the fact that the subjective realization of the work of redemption in the hearts and lives of sinners is a work of divine grace, but at the same time give a representation of the *ordo salutis* which places the main emphasis on what is done *a parte hominis* (on the part of man) rather than on what is done *a parte Dei* (on the part of God). They see in faith first of all a gift of God, but at the same time make faith, regarded more particularly as an active principle in man and as an activity of man, the all-determining factor in their order of salvation. Says Pieper: "So kommt denn hinsichtlich der Heilsaneignung alles darauf an, dass im Menschen der Glaube an das Evangelium entstehe." [*Christl. Dogm.* II, p. 477. Cf. also Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 258 ff.] Attention was already called to the fact that Kaftan regards faith as the whole of the *ordo salutis*. This emphasis on faith as an active principle is undoubtedly due to the fact that in the Lutheran Reformation the doctrine of justification by faith — often called the material principle of the Reformation — was very much in the foreground. According to Pieper the Lutheran takes his

starting point in the fact that in Christ God is reconciled to the world of humanity. God announces this fact to man in the gospel and offers to put man subjectively in possession of that forgiveness of sins or justification which was objectively wrought in Christ. This calling is always accompanied with a certain measure of illumination and of quickening, so that man receives the power to not-resist the saving operation of the Holy Spirit. It frequently results in repentance, and this may issue in regeneration, by which the Holy Spirit endows the sinner with saving grace. Now all these, namely, calling, illumination, repentance, and regeneration, are really only preparatory, and are strictly speaking not yet blessings of the covenant of grace. They are experienced apart from any living relation to Christ, and merely serve to lead the sinner to Christ. "Regeneration is conditioned by the conduct of man with regard to the influence exerted upon him," and therefore "will take place at once or gradually, as man's resistance is greater or less." [Schmid, *Doct. Theol.*, p. 464.] In it man is endowed with a saving faith by which he appropriates the forgiveness or justification that is objectively given in Christ, is adopted as a child of God, is united to Christ in a mystical union, and receives the spirit of renewal and sanctification, the living principle of a life of obedience. The *permanent* possession of all these blessings depends on the continuance of faith, — on an active faith on the part of man. If man continues to believe, he has peace and joy, life and salvation; but if he ceases to exercise faith, all this becomes doubtful, uncertain, and amissible. There is always a possibility that the believer will lose all that he possesses.

3. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW. In Roman Catholic theology the doctrine of the Church precedes the discussion of the *ordo salutis*. Children are regenerated by baptism, but they who first become acquainted with the gospel in later life receive a *gratia sufficiens*, consisting in an illumination of the mind and a strengthening of the will. Man can resist this grace, but can also assent to it. If he assents to it, it turns into a *gratia co-operans*, in which man co-operates to prepare himself for justification. This

preparation consists of seven parts: (a) a believing acceptance of the Word of God, (b) an insight into one's sinful condition, (c) hope in the mercy of God, (d) the beginning of love to God, (e) an abhorrence of sin, (f) a resolve to obey the commandments of God, and (g) a desire for baptism. It is quite evident that faith does not occupy a central place here, but is simply co-ordinated with the other preparations. It is merely an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the Church (*fides informis*) and acquires its justifying power only through the love that is imparted in the *gratia infusa* (*fides caritate formata*). It can be called justifying faith only in the sense that it is the basis and root of all justification as the first of the preparations named above. After this preparation justification itself follows in baptism. This consists in the infusion of grace, of supernatural virtues, followed by the forgiveness of sins. The measure of this forgiveness is commensurate with the degree in which sin is actually overcome. It should be borne in mind that justification is given freely, and is not merited by the preceding preparations. The gift of justification is preserved by obeying the commandments and by doing good works. In the *gratia infusa* man receives the supernatural strength to do good works and thus to merit (with a merit *de condigno*, that is, real merit) all following grace and even everlasting life. The grace of God thus serves the purpose of enabling man once more to merit salvation. But it is not certain that man will retain the forgiveness of sins. The grace of justification may be lost, not only through unbelief, but through any mortal sin. It may be regained, however, by the sacrament of penance, consisting of contrition (or, attrition) and confession, together with absolution and works of satisfaction. Both the guilt of sin and eternal punishment are removed by absolution, but temporal penalties can be canceled only by works of satisfaction.

4. THE ARMINIAN VIEW. The Arminian order of salvation, while ostensibly ascribing the work of salvation to God, really makes it contingent on the attitude and the work of man. God opens up the possibility of salvation for man, but it is up to man to improve the opportunity. The Arminian regards the atonement of

Christ “as an oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” (Pope), that is, for the sins of every individual of the human race. He denies that the guilt of Adam’s sin is imputed to all his descendants, and that man is by nature totally depraved, and therefore unable to do any spiritual good; and believes that, while human nature is undoubtedly injured and deteriorated as the result of the fall, man is still able, by nature, to do that which is spiritually good and to turn to God. But because of the evil bias, the perverseness, and the sluggishness of sinful human nature, God imparts to it gracious assistance. He bestows sufficient grace upon all men to enable them, if they choose, to attain to the full possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation. The gospel offer comes to all men indiscriminately and exerts a merely moral influence on them, while they have it in their power to resist it or to yield to it. If they yield to it, they will turn to Christ in repentance and faith. These movements of the soul are not (as in Calvinism) the results of regeneration, but are merely introductory to the state of grace properly so called. When their faith really terminates in Christ, this faith is, for the sake of the merits of Christ, imputed to them for righteousness. This does not mean that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them as their very own, but that, in view of what Christ did for sinners, their faith, which involves the principle of obedience, honesty of heart, and good dispositions, is accepted in lieu of a perfect obedience and is reckoned to them for righteousness. On this basis, then, they are justified, which in the Arminian scheme generally simply means that their sins are pardoned, and not that they are accepted as righteous. Arminians often put it in this form: The forgiveness of sins is based on the merits of Christ, but acceptance with God rests on man’s obedience to the law or evangelical obedience. Faith not only serves to justify, but also to regenerate sinners. It insures to man the grace of evangelical obedience and this, if allowed to function through life, issues in the grace of perseverance. However, the grace of God is always resistible and amissible.

The so-called Wesleyan or Evangelical Arminian does not entirely agree with the Arminianism of the seventeenth century. While his position shows greater affinity with Calvinism than the original Arminianism does, it is also more inconsistent. It admits that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all his descendants, but at the same time holds that all men are justified in Christ, and that therefore this guilt is at once removed, at birth. It also admits the entire moral depravity of man in the state of nature, but goes on to stress the fact that no man exists in that state of nature, since there is a universal application of the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit, by which the sinner is enabled to co-operate with the grace of God. It emphasizes the necessity of a *supernatural* (hyper-physical) work of grace to effect the sinner's renovation and sanctification. Moreover, it teaches the doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification in the present life. It may be added that, while Arminius made the bestowal on man of an ability to co-operate with God a matter of justice, Wesley regarded this as a matter of pure grace. This is the type of Arminianism with which we mostly come in contact. We meet with it, not only in the Methodist Church, but also in large sections of other Churches, and especially in the many undenominational Churches of the present day.

II. The Operation of the Holy Spirit in General

A. TRANSITION TO THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

As already intimated in the preceding, in passing from Christology to Soteriology, we pass from the objective to the subjective, from the work which God accomplished *for us* in Christ and which is in its sacrificial aspect a finished work, to the work which He realizes as time goes on *in the hearts and lives of believers*, and in which they are permitted, and also expected, to co-operate. And in the construction of this doctrine, too, we should be guided by Scripture. Dr. Bavinck calls attention to a difficulty that arises here, since the Bible seems to teach on the one hand that the whole work of redemption is finished in Christ, so that nothing remains for man to do; and on the other hand, that the really decisive thing must still be accomplished in and through man. Its teaching respecting the way of redemption seems to be both *autosoteric* and *heterosoteric*. Therefore it is necessary to guard against all one-sidedness, and to avoid both the Scylla of Nomism, as it appears in Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Neonomism, and the Charybdis of Antinomianism, as it reared its head, sometimes as a specific doctrine and sometimes as a mere doctrinal tendency, in some of the sects, such as the Nicolaitans, the Alexandrian Gnostics, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Anabaptists of the more fanatic type, the followers of Agricola, the Moravians, and some of the Plymouth brethren. Nomism denies the sovereign election of God by which He has infallibly determined, not on the basis of the foreseen attitude or works of men, but according to His good pleasure, who would and would not be saved; rejects the idea that Christ by His atoning death, not only made salvation possible, but actually secured it for

all those for whom He laid down His life, so that eternal life is in the most absolute sense of the word a free gift of God, and in its bestowal human merits are not taken into consideration; and maintains, either that man can save himself without the aid of renewing grace (Pelagianism), or can accomplish this with the assistance of divine grace (Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism). On the other hand Antinomianism, which is sometimes said to be favored by hyper-Calvinism, holds that the imputation of our sins to Christ made Him personally a sinner, and that the application of His righteousness to us makes us personally righteous, so that God sees no sin in us any more; that the union of believers with Christ is a “union of identity” and makes them in all respects one with Him; that the work of the Holy Spirit is quite superfluous, since the sinner’s redemption was completed on the cross, or — even more extreme — that the work of Christ was also unnecessary, since the whole matter was settled in the eternal decree of God; that the sinner is justified in the resurrection of Christ or even in the counsel of redemption, and therefore does not need justification by faith or receives in this merely a declaration of a previously accomplished justification; and that believers are free from the law, not only as a condition of the covenant of works, but also as a rule of life. It virtually denies the personality and work of the Holy Spirit, and in some cases even the objective atonement through Christ. Both atonement and justification are from eternity. The penitent sinner wrongly proceeds on the assumption that God is angry with him and merely needs information on that point. Moreover, he should realize that whatever sins he may commit cannot affect his standing with God.

Scripture teaches us to recognize a certain economy in the work of creation and redemption and warrants our speaking of the Father and our creation, of the Son and our redemption, and of the Holy Spirit and our sanctification. The Holy Spirit has not only a personality of His own, but also a distinctive method of working; and therefore we should distinguish between the work of Christ in meriting salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in applying it.

Christ met the demands of divine justice and merited all the blessings of salvation. But His work is not yet finished. He continues it in heaven, in order to put those for whom He laid down His life in possession of all that He has merited for them. Even the work of application is a work of Christ, but a work which He accomplishes through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Though this work stands out in the economy of redemption as the work of the Holy Spirit, it cannot for a moment be separated from the work of Christ. It is rooted in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and carries this to completion, and that not without the co-operation of the subjects of redemption. Christ Himself points out the close connection when He says: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." John 16:13,14.

B. GENERAL AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Scripture clearly shows that not all the operations of the Holy Spirit are part and parcel of the saving work of Jesus Christ. Just as the Son of God is not only the Mediator of redemption, but also the Mediator of creation, so the Holy Spirit, as represented in Scripture, is operative, not only in the work of redemption, but also in the work of creation. Naturally, Soteriology is concerned with His redemptive work only, but for its proper understanding it is highly desirable to take some account of His more general operations.

1. THE GENERAL OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is a well known fact that the trinitarian distinctions are not as clearly revealed in the Old Testament as in the New. The term "Spirit of God," as it is employed in the Old Testament, does not always denote a person, and even in cases in which the personal idea is

clearly present, does not always specifically point to the third person of the Holy Trinity. It is sometimes used figuratively to denote the breath of God, Job 32:8; Ps. 33:6, and in some instances is simply a synonym for “God,” Ps. 139:7,8; Isa. 40:13. It serves very commonly to designate the power of life, the principle that causes the creatures to live, and that is in a unique way peculiar to God. The spirit dwelling in the creatures, and on which their very existence depends, is from God and binds them to God, Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14,15; Ps. 104:29; Isa. 42:5. God is called the “God (or, “Father”) of the spirits of all flesh,” Num. 16:22; 27:16; Heb. 12:9. In some of these cases it is quite evident that the Spirit of God is not a mere power but a person. The very first passage in which the Spirit is mentioned, Gen. 1:2, already calls attention to this life-giving function, and this is particularized in connection with the creation of man, Gen. 2:7. The Spirit of God generates life and carries the creative work of God to completion, Job 33:4; 34:14,15; Ps. 104:29,30; Isa. 42:5. It is evident from the Old Testament that the origin of life, its maintenance, and its development depend on the operation of the Holy Spirit. The withdrawal of the Spirit means death.

Extraordinary exhibitions of power, feats of strength and daring, are also referred to the Spirit of God. The judges whom God raised up for the deliverance of Israel were evidently men of considerable ability and of unusual daring and strength, but the real secret of their accomplishments lay not in themselves, but in a supernatural power that came upon them. It is said repeatedly that “the spirit of Jehovah came (mightily) upon them,” Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14. It was the Spirit of God that enabled them to work deliverance for the people. There is also a clear recognition of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the intellectual sphere. Elihu speaks of this when he says: “But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” Job 32:8. Intellectual insight, or the ability to understand the problems of life, is ascribed to an illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit. The heightening of artistic skill is also ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord, Ex. 28:3; 31:3;

35:30 ff. Certain men, characterized by special endowments, were qualified for the finer work that was to be done in connection with the construction of the tabernacle and the adornment of the priestly garments, cf. also Neh. 9:20. Again, the Spirit of the Lord is represented as qualifying men for various offices. The Spirit was put, and rested, upon the seventy who were appointed to assist Moses in ruling and judging the people of Israel, Num. 11:17,25,26. These also received the spirit of prophecy temporarily, to attest their calling. Joshua was chosen as the successor of Moses, because he had the Spirit of the Lord, Num. 27:18. When Saul and David were anointed as kings, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, to qualify them for their important task, I Sam. 10:6,10; 16:13,14. Finally, the Spirit of God also clearly operated in the prophets as the Spirit of revelation. David says, "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue," II Sam. 23:2. Nehemiah testifies in Neh. 9:30: "Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through the prophets: yet they would not give ear." Ezekiel speaks of a vision by the Spirit of Jehovah, 11:24, and in Zech. 7:12 we read: "Yea, they made their heart as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent in His Spirit by the former prophets." Cf. also I Kings 22:24; I Pet. 1:11; II Pet. 1:21.

2. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE GENERAL AND THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. There is a certain similarity between the general and the special operations of the Holy Spirit. By His general operations He originates, maintains, strengthens, and guides all life, organic, intellectual, and moral. He does this in different ways and in harmony with the objects concerned. Something similar may be said of His special operation. In the redemptive sphere He also originates the new life, fructifies it, guides it in its development, and leads it to its destiny. But in spite of this similarity, there is nevertheless an essential difference between the operations of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of creation and those in the sphere of redemption or re-creation. In the former He originates, maintains, develops and guides *the life of the natural*

creation, restrains for the present the deteriorating and devastating influence of sin in the lives of men and of society, and enables men to maintain a certain order and decorum in their communal life, to do what is outwardly good and right in their relations to each other, and to develop the talents with which they were endowed at creation. In the latter, on the other hand, He originates, maintains, develops, and guides *the new life* that is born from above, is nourished from above, and will be perfected above, — a life that is heavenly in principle, though lived on earth. By His special operation the Holy Spirit overcomes and destroys the power of sin, renews man in the image of God, and enables him to render spiritual obedience to God, to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a spiritual leaven in every sphere of life. While the work of the Holy Spirit in creation in general undoubtedly has a certain independent significance, yet it is made subordinate to the work of redemption. The entire life of the elect, also that preceding their new birth, is determined and governed by God with a view to their final destiny. Their natural life is so regulated that, when it is renewed, it will answer to the purpose of God.

C. THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE DISPENSER OF DIVINE GRACE.

As the covenant in which God made provision for the salvation of sinners is called the covenant of grace, and as the Mediator of the covenant is said to have appeared “full of grace,” so that we can receive out of His fulness “grace for grace,” John 1:16,17, so the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of grace,” since He takes the “grace of Christ” and confers it on us.

1. THE BIBLICAL USE OF THE TERM “GRACE”. The word “grace” is not always used in the same sense in Scripture, but has a variety of meanings. In the Old Testament we have the word *chen* (adj. *chanun*), from the root *chanan*. The noun may denote *gracefulness* or *beauty*, Prov. 22:11; 31:30, but most

generally means *favour* or *good-will*. The Old Testament repeatedly speaks of finding favour in the eyes of God or of man. The favour so found carries with it the bestowal of favours or blessings. This means that grace is not an abstract quality, but is an active, working principle, manifesting itself in beneficent acts, Gen. 6:8; 19:19; 33:15; Ex. 33:12; 34:9; I Sam. 1:18; 27:5; Esth. 2:7. The fundamental idea is, that the blessings graciously bestowed are *freely* given, and not in consideration of any claim or merit. The New Testament word *charis*, from *chairein*, "to rejoice," denotes first of all a *pleasant external appearance*, "loveliness," "agreeableness," "acceptableness," and has some such meaning in Luke 4:22; Col. 4:6. A more prominent meaning of the word, however, is *favour* or *good-will*, Luke 1:30; 2:40,52; Acts 2:47; 7:46; 24:27; 25:9. It may denote the kindness or beneficence of our Lord, II Cor. 8:9, or the favour manifested or bestowed by God, II Cor. 9:8 (referring to material blessings); I Pet. 5:10. Furthermore, the word is expressive of the emotion awakened in the heart of the recipient of such favour, and thus acquires the meaning "*gratitude*" or "*thankfulness*," Luke 4:22; I Cor. 10:30; 15:57; II Cor. 2:14; 8:16; I Tim. 1:12. In most of the passages, however, in which the word *charis* is used in the New Testament, it signifies the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. While we sometimes speak of grace as an inherent quality, it is in reality the active communication of divine blessings by the inworking of the Holy Spirit, out of the fulness of Him who is "full of grace and truth," Rom. 3:24; 5:2,15, 17,20; 6:1; I Cor. 1:4; II Cor. 6:1; 8:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:5,8; 3:7; I Pet. 3:7; 5:12.

2. THE GRACE OF GOD IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.

A discussion of the grace of God in connection with the work of redemption again calls for several distinctions, which should be borne in mind.

a. In the first place grace is an attribute of God, one of the divine perfections. It is God's free, sovereign, undeserved favour or love to man, in his state of sin and guilt, which manifests itself in the

forgiveness of sin and deliverance from its penalty. It is connected with the mercy of God as distinguished from His justice. This is redemptive grace in the most fundamental sense of the word. It is the ultimate cause of God's elective purpose, of the sinner's justification, and of his spiritual renewal; and the prolific source of all spiritual and eternal blessings.

b. In the second place the term "grace" is used as a designation of the objective provision which God made in Christ for the salvation of man. Christ as the Mediator is the living embodiment of the grace of God. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth," John 1:14. Paul has the appearance of Christ in mind, when he says: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men," Tit. 2:11. But the term is applied not only to what Christ *is*, but also to what He *merited* for sinners. When the apostle speaks repeatedly in the closing salutations of his Epistles of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he has in mind the grace of which Christ is the meritorious cause. John says: "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ," John 1:17. Cf. also Eph. 2:7.

c. In the third place the word "grace" is used to designate the favour of God as it is manifested in the application of the work of redemption by the Holy Spirit. It is applied to the pardon which we receive in justification, a pardon freely given by God, Rom. 3:24; 5:2,21; Tit. 3:15. But in addition to that it is also a comprehensive name for all the gifts of the grace of God, the blessings of salvation, and the spiritual graces which are wrought in the hearts and lives of believers through the operation of the Holy Spirit, Acts 11:23; 18:27; Rom. 5:17; I Cor. 15:10; II Cor. 9:14; Eph. 4:7; Jas. 4:5,6; I Pet. 3:7. Moreover, there are clear indications of the fact that it is not a mere passive quality, but also an active force, a power, something that labours, I Cor. 15:10; II Cor. 12:9; II Tim. 2:1. In this sense of the word it is something like a synonym for the Holy Spirit, so that there is little difference between "full of the Holy Spirit" and "full of grace and power" in Acts 6:5 and 8. The Holy Spirit is called "the

Spirit of grace” in Heb. 10:29. It is especially in connection with the teachings of Scripture respecting the application of the grace of God to the sinner by the Holy Spirit, that the doctrine of grace was developed in the Church.

3. THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE IN THE CHURCH. The teachings of Scripture respecting the grace of God stress the fact that God distributes His blessings to men *in a free and sovereign manner, and not in consideration of any inherent merit of men*; that men owe all the blessings of life to a beneficent, forbearing, and longsuffering God; and especially that all the blessings of the work of salvation are freely given of God, and are in no way determined by supposed merits of men. This is clearly expressed by Paul in the following words: “For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory,” Eph. 2:8,9. He strongly emphasizes the fact that salvation is not by works, Rom. 3:20-28; 4:16; Gal. 2:16.

This doctrine did not go entirely unchallenged. In some of the early Church Fathers, particularly of the Eastern Church, we already meet with a strain of moralism that is not in harmony with the Pauline emphasis. The tendency that became apparent in that section of the Church, finally culminated in Pelagianism. Pelagius’ conception of grace was rather unusual. According to Wiggers he comprehended under grace: (a) “The power of doing good (*possibilitas boni*), and therefore especially free will itself.” (b) “The revelation, the law, and the example of Christ, by which the practice of virtue is made easier for man.” (c) “Our being so made as to be able, by our own will, to abstain from sin, and in God’s giving us the help of His law and His commands, and *in His pardoning the previous sins of those who return to Him.*” (d) “Supernatural influences on the Christian, by which his understanding is enlightened and the practice of virtue is rendered easy to him.”[Augustinism and Pelagianism, pp. 179-183.] He recognized no *direct* operation of the Spirit of God on the will of man, but only an *indirect* operation on the will through the enlightened conscience. In his view the operation of the grace of

God was primarily, though not exclusively, external and natural. In opposition to the Pelagian view, that of Augustine is often designated as “the theology of grace.” While Augustine admitted that the word “grace” could be used in a wider sense (natural grace), and that even in the state of integrity it was the grace of God that made it possible for Adam to retain his uprightness, his main emphasis is always on grace as the gift of God to fallen man, which manifests itself in the forgiveness of sin and in the renewal and sanctification of human nature. In view of the total depravity of man he regards this grace as absolutely necessary unto salvation. It is wrought in man by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who dwells and works in the elect and is the principle of all the blessings of salvation. He distinguished between *operating* or *prevenient*, and *co-operating* or *subsequent* grace. The former enables the will to choose the good, and the latter co-operates with the already enabled will, to do the good. In his struggle with Semi-Pelagianism Augustine emphasized the entirely gratuitous and irresistible character of the grace of God.

In the subsequent struggles the Augustinian doctrine of grace was only partly victorious. Seeberg expresses himself as follows: “Thus the doctrine of ‘grace alone’ came off victorious; but the Augustinian doctrine of predestination was abandoned. The irresistible grace of predestination was driven from the field by the sacramental grace of baptism.”[*History of Doctrine*, I, p. 382.] During the Middle Ages the Scholastics paid considerable attention to the subject of grace, but did not always agree as to the details of the doctrine. Some approached the Augustinian, and others the Semi-Pelagian conception of grace. In general it may be said that they conceived of grace as mediated through the sacraments, and that they sought to combine with the doctrine of grace a doctrine of merit which seriously compromised the former. The emphasis was not on grace as the favor of God shown to sinners, but on grace as a quality of the soul, which might be regarded as both uncreated (i.e., as the Holy Spirit), or as increated, or wrought in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit. This infused

grace is basic to the development of the Christian virtues, and enables man to acquire merit with God, to merit further grace, though he cannot merit the grace of perseverance. This can only be obtained as a free gift of God. The Scholastics did not, like Augustine, maintain the logical connection between the doctrine of grace and the doctrine of predestination.

The Reformers went back to the Augustinian conception of grace, but avoided his sacramentarianism. They placed the emphasis once more on grace as the unmerited favour of God shown to sinners, and represented it in a manner which excluded all merit on the part of the sinner. Says Smeaton: "The term *grace*, which in Augustine's acceptation intimated the inward exercise of love, awakened by the operations of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and which in the scholastic theology had come to denote a quality of the soul, or the inner endowments, and infused habits of faith, love, and hope, was now taken in the more scriptural and wider sense for the free, the efficacious *favour* which is in the divine mind." [*The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, p. 346.] While the Reformers used the term *grace* in connection with justification, in other connections they often used the phrase, "the work of the Holy Spirit," instead of the term *grace*. While they all emphasized grace in the sense of the internal and saving operation of the Holy Spirit, Calvin especially developed the idea of common grace, that is, a grace which, while it is the expression of the favour of God, does not have a saving effect. According to the splendid dogma-historical study of Dr. H. Kuiper on *Calvin on Common Grace*, [pp. 179 ff.] he even distinguished three kinds of common grace, namely, universal common grace, general common grace, and covenant common grace. The Arminians departed from the doctrine of the Reformation on this point. According to them God gives sufficient (common) grace to all men, and thereby enables them to repent and believe. If the human will concurs or co-operates with the Holy Spirit and man actually repents and believes, God confers on man the further grace of evangelical obedience and the grace of perseverance. Thus the work of the grace of God is made to depend on the consent of the will of

man. There is no such thing as irresistible grace. Says Smeaton in the work already quoted: "It was held that every one could obey or resist; that the cause of conversion was not the Holy Spirit so much as the human will concurring or co-operating; and that this was the immediate cause of conversion." [p. 357.] Amyraldus of the School of Saumur did not really improve on the Arminian position by his assumption, in connection with the general decree of God, that the sinner, while devoid of the moral ability, yet has the natural ability to believe, an unfortunate distinction, which was also carried over into New England by Edwards, Bellamy and Fuller. Pajon, a disciple of Amyraldus, denied the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the internal illumination of sinners, in order to their saving conversion. The only thing which he regarded as necessary was that the understanding, which has in itself a sufficiency of clear ideas, should be struck by the light of external revelation. Bishop Warburton in his work on *The Doctrine of Grace, or the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit* knows of no saving grace in the accepted sense of the word, but limits the word "grace" to the extraordinary operations of the Spirit in the apostolic age. And Junckheim in his important work denied the supernatural character of God's work in the conversion of the sinner, and affirmed that the moral power of the word effected all. The Methodist Revival in England and the Great Awakening in our own country brought with them a restoration of the doctrine of saving grace, though in some cases tinged more or less with Arminianism. For Schleiermacher the problem of the guilt of sin was practically non-existent, since he denied the objective existence of guilt. And consequently he knows little or nothing of the saving grace of God. Says Mackintosh: "This central Biblical truth (of divine mercy to sinners) Schleiermacher for the most part passes by in silence, or mentions only in a perfunctory fashion that shows how little he understands it." [*Types of Modern Theology*, p. 96.] The doctrine of divine grace is also necessarily obscured in the theology of Albrecht Ritschl. And it may be said to be characteristic of the whole of modern liberal theology, with its emphasis on the goodness of man, that it has lost sight of the necessity of the saving grace of God. The word "grace" has

gradually disappeared from the written and spoken word of many theologians, and many of the common people in our day attach no other meaning to the term than that of gracefulness or graciousness. Even Otto calls attention to it in his work on *The Idea of the Holy* that people fail to sense the deeper meaning of the word. [pp. 32 ff., 145.] The Theology of Crisis deserves credit for stressing anew the need of divine grace, with the result that the word is once more coming into use.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: On which elements of the *ordo salutis* did the emphasis fall in the first three centuries? In how far did these centuries reveal a drift towards moralism and ceremonialism? How was the doctrine of justification understood? How did Augustine conceive of it? What was his conception of faith? How many kinds of grace did he distinguish? Did grace exclude all merit in his system? Did he conceive of saving grace as amissible? What factors favored the development of the doctrine of good works? How did the Scholastics represent the doctrine of justification? How did the *ordo salutis* fare in the hands of the Antinomians? How did the rationalistic and pietistic neonomians conceive of it? What other than saving operations are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in Scripture? Which are the different meanings of the word 'grace' in Scripture? What does it designate in connection with the work of redemption? What is the relation between the doctrines of free will and grace in history?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* III, pp. 551-690; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 15-20; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, pp. 367-371; Kaftan, *Dogmatik*, pp. 525-532, 651-661; Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*; Seeberg, *Heilsordnung* (Art. in Hauck's *Realencyclopaedie*); Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.* II, pp. 473-498; H. Schmid, *Doct. Theol.*, pp. 413-416; K. Dijk, *Heilsorde* (Art. in *Chr. Enc.*); Pope, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 348-367; Neil, *Grace* (Art. in *A Protestant Dictionary*); Easton, *Grace* (Art. in the *Intern. Standard Bible Ec.*); Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 1-99, 291-414; Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, pp. 339-364;

Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*; Bryan, W. S., *An Inquiry into the Need of the Grace of God*.

III. Common Grace

In connection with the general operations of the Holy Spirit the subject of common grace also calls for attention. It should be understood, however, that Reformed theology does not, like Arminian theology, regard the doctrine of common grace as a part of Soteriology. At the same time it does recognize a close connection between the operations of the Holy Spirit in the sphere of creation and in that of redemption, and therefore feels that they should not be entirely dissociated.

A. ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE OF COMMON GRACE.

1. THE PROBLEM WITH WHICH IT DEALS. The origin of the doctrine of common grace was occasioned by the fact that there is in the world, alongside of the course of the Christian life with all its blessings, a natural course of life, which is not redemptive and yet exhibits many traces of the true, the good, and the beautiful. The question arose, How can we explain the comparatively orderly life in the world, seeing that the whole world lies under the curse of sin? How is it that the earth yields precious fruit in rich abundance and does not simply bring forth thorns and thistles? How can we account for it that sinful man still “retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior”? What explanation can be given of the special gifts and talents with which the natural man is endowed, and of the development of science and art by those who are entirely devoid of the new life that is in Christ Jesus? How can we explain the religious aspirations of men everywhere, even of those who did not come in touch with the Christian religion? How can the unregenerate still speak the truth,

do good to others, and lead outwardly virtuous lives? These are some of the questions to which the doctrine of common grace seeks to supply the answer.

2. AUGUSTINE'S ATTITUDE TO THIS PROBLEM. Augustine did not teach the doctrine of common grace, though he did not use the word "grace" exclusively as a designation of saving grace. He spoke of a grace which Adam enjoyed before the fall, and even admitted that man's existing as a living, sentient, and rational being might be termed grace. But over against Pelagius, who stressed the natural ability of man and recognized no other grace than that consisting in the natural endowments of man, the law and the gospel, the example of Christ, and the illumination of the understanding by a gracious influence of God, — he emphasized the total inability of man and his absolute dependence on the grace of God as an inner renewing power, which not only illumines the mind but also acts directly on the will of man, either as operating or as co-operating grace. He employs the word "grace" almost exclusively in this sense, and regards this grace as the necessary condition to the performance of each good act. When the Pelagians pointed to the virtues of the heathen, who "merely through the power of innate freedom" were often merciful, discreet, chaste, and temperate, he answered that these so-called virtues were sins, because they did not spring from faith. He admits that the heathen can perform certain acts which are in themselves good and from a lower point of view even praiseworthy, but yet considers these deeds, *as the deeds of unregenerate persons*, to be sin, because they do not spring from the motive of love to God or of faith, and do not answer to the right purpose, the glory of God.[Cf. Polman, *De Predestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn*, pp. 77 f.; Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine II*, pp. 75 f.] He denies that such deeds are the fruit of any natural goodness in man.

3. THE VIEW THAT DEVELOPED DURING THE MIDDLE AGES. During the Middle Ages the Augustinian antithesis of *sin and grace* gave way to that of *nature and grace*. This was based on

another antithesis which played an important part in Roman Catholic theology, namely, that of the natural and the supernatural. In the state of integrity man was endowed with the supernatural gift of original righteousness, which served as a bridle to hold the lower nature in check. As the result of the fall, man lost this supernatural gift, but his real nature remained or was but slightly affected. A sinful bias developed, but this did not prohibit man from producing much that was true, and good, and beautiful. However, without the infusion of the grace of God, all this did not suffice to give one a claim to life eternal. In connection with the antithesis of the natural and the supernatural, the Roman Catholic Church developed the distinction between the moral virtues of humility, obedience, meekness, liberality, temperance, chastity, and diligence in what is good, which men can gain for themselves by their own labors, and with the timely aid of divine grace; and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which are infused into man by sanctifying grace. Anabaptism and Socinianism suffer from the same antithesis, but with the distinction that the former exalts grace at the expense of nature, while the latter exalts nature at the expense of grace.

4. THE POSITION OF THE REFORMERS AND OF REFORMED THEOLOGY. On this, as on some other points of doctrine, Luther did not entirely escape the leaven of Roman Catholicism. While he did return to the Augustinian antithesis of sin and grace, he drew a sharp distinction between the lower earthly sphere and the higher spiritual sphere, and maintained that fallen man is by nature capable of doing much that is good and praiseworthy in the lower or earthly sphere, though he is utterly incapable of doing any spiritual good. With an appeal to Augustine the Augsburg Confession teaches “that man’s will hath some liberty to work a civil righteousness, and to choose such things as reason can reach unto; but that it hath no power to work the righteousness of God.”[Art. XVIII.] The Article contains a quotation from Augustine, in which many of the good works pertaining to the present life, which the natural man can do, are named. Zwingli conceived of sin as pollution rather than as guilt, and consequently

regarded the grace of God as sanctifying, rather than as pardoning, grace. This sanctifying influence, which penetrated in a measure even into the Gentile world, accounts for the true, the good, and the beautiful that is in the world. Calvin did not agree with the position of Luther, nor with that of Zwingli. He firmly maintained that the natural man can *of himself* do no good work whatsoever and strongly insisted on the particular nature of saving grace. He developed alongside of the doctrine of particular grace the doctrine of common grace. This is a grace which is communal, does not pardon nor purify human nature, and does not effect the salvation of sinners. It curbs the destructive power of sin, maintains in a measure the moral order of the universe, thus making an orderly life possible, distributes in varying degrees gifts and talents among men, promotes the development of science and art, and showers untold blessings upon the children of men. Since the days of Calvin the doctrine of common grace was generally recognized in Reformed theology, though it also met with occasional opposition. For a long time, however, little was done to develop the doctrine. This was in all probability due to the fact that the rise and prevalence of Rationalism made it necessary to place all emphasis on special grace. Up to the present Kuyper and Bavinck did more than any one else for the development of the doctrine of common grace.

B. NAME AND CONCEPT OF COMMON GRACE.

1. NAME. The name “common grace” as a designation of the grace now under discussion cannot be said to owe its origin to Calvin. Dr. H. Kuiper in his work on *Calvin on Common Grace* says that he found only four passages in Calvin’s works in which the adjective “common” is used with the noun “grace,” and in two of these the Reformer is speaking of saving grace.[Cf. p. 178.] In later Reformed theology, however, the name *gratia communis* came into general

use to express the idea that this grace extends to all men, in contrast with the *gratia particularis* which is limited to a part of mankind, namely, to the elect. In course of time it became evident that the term “communis” admitted of various interpretations. In Dutch theology it is often regarded as equivalent to “general,” and as a result it became customary to speak of “general grace” (*algemeene genade*) in the Netherlands. Strictly speaking, however, the term *communis*, as applied to grace, while implying that it is general in some sense of the word, stresses the fact that this grace is communal, that is, possessed in common by all creatures, or by all men, or by those who live under the administration of the gospel. Thus Dr. H. Kuiper classifies the common grace of which Calvin speaks under three heads, namely: (1) Universal Common Grace, a grace that extends to all creatures; (2) General Common Grace, that is a grace which applies to mankind in general and to every member of the human race; and (3) Covenant Common Grace, a grace that is common to all those who live in the sphere of the covenant, whether they belong to the elect or not. It is quite evident that Reformed theologians also subsumed under the term “common grace” a grace that is not general, namely, the external privileges of those who are living under the administration of the gospel, including the external universal calling. At the same time they point out that this grace, in distinction from general common grace, belongs to the economy of redemption.[Cf. Mastricht, *God geleerdheit* I, p. 441; Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* I, pp. 729 f.; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* II, p. 654; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theol.*, p. 449; Shedd, *Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, pp. 98 f.; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 13 f.] Finally, it should be noted that the term *gratia communis* is susceptible of, and has actually received, not only a quantitative, but also a qualitative interpretation. It may denote a grace that is common in the sense of *ordinary*. The ordinary, in distinction from the special, operations of the Holy Spirit are called common. His natural or usual operations are contrasted with those which are unusual and supernatural. This is the meaning of the term “common” in the *Westminster Confession* X. 4; and the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q. 60. W. L. Alexander declares

of the common grace enjoyed by those who live under the gospel: “The grace thus bestowed is common, not in the sense of being given to all men in common, but in the sense of producing effects which are ordinary, and may fall short of a real saving efficacy.”[*System of Bib. Theol.* II, p. 352.] So understood, the grace of God may be common without being general or universal.

2. CONCEPT. The distinction between common and special grace is not one that applies to grace as an attribute in God. There are no two kinds of grace in God, but only one. It is that perfection of God in virtue of which he shows unmerited and even forfeited favour to man. This one grace of God manifests itself, however, in different gifts and operations. The richest manifestation of it is seen in those gracious operations of God which aim at, and result in, the removal of the guilt, the pollution, and the punishment of sin, and the ultimate salvation of sinners. But while this is the crowning work of the grace of God, it is not its only manifestation. It appears also in the natural blessings which God showers upon man in the present life, in spite of the fact that man has forfeited them and lies under the sentence of death. It is seen in all that God does to restrain the devastating influence and development of sin in the world, and to maintain and enrich and develop the natural life of mankind in general and of those individuals who constitute the human race. It should be emphasized that these natural blessings are manifestations of the *grace* of God to man in general. Some prefer to say that they are expressions of His goodness, kindness, benevolence, mercy, or longsuffering, but seem to forget that He could not be good, kind, or benevolent to the *sinner* unless He were first of all *gracious*. It should be borne in mind, however, that the term *gratia communis*, though generally designating a grace that is common to the whole of mankind, is also used to denote a grace that is common to the elect and the non-elect that are living under the gospel, such as the external gospel call that comes to both alike, and that inner illumination and those gifts of the Spirit of which we read in Heb. 6:4-6. It is understood, however, that these privileges can be called common grace only in the sense that they are enjoyed

by the elect and the reprobate indiscriminately, and that they do not constitute special, in the sense of saving, grace. In distinction from the more general manifestations of common grace they, while they do not constitute a part of the grace of God that necessarily leads to salvation, are nevertheless related to the soteriological process. They are sometimes called “special” grace, but then “special” is not equivalent to “saving.” In general it may be said that, when we speak of “common grace,” we have in mind, either (a) *those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, without renewing the heart, exercises such a moral influence on man through His general or special revelation, that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted; or, (b) those general blessings, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter, which God imparts to all men indiscriminately where and in what measure it seems good to Him.*

The following points of distinction between special (in the sense of saving) and common grace should be noted:

a. The extent of special grace is determined by the decree of election. This grace is limited to the elect, while common grace is not so limited, but is granted to all men indiscriminately. The decree of election and reprobation has no determining influence on it. It cannot even be said that the elect receive a greater measure of common grace than the non-elect. It is a matter of common knowledge, and has frequently been observed, that the wicked often possess a greater measure of common grace and have a greater share in the natural blessings of life than the pious.

b. Special grace removes the guilt and penalty of sin, changes the inner life of man, and gradually cleanses him from the pollution of sin by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. Its work invariably issues in the salvation of the sinner. Common grace, on the other hand, never removes the guilt of sin, does not renew human nature, but only has a restraining effect on the corrupting influence of sin and in a measure mitigates its results. It does not

effect the salvation of the sinner, though in some of its forms (external calling and moral illumination) it may be closely connected with the economy of redemption and have a soteriological aspect.

c. Special grace is irresistible. This does not mean that it is a deterministic force which compels man to believe against his will, but that by changing the heart it makes man perfectly willing to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation and to yield obedience to the will of God. Common grace is resistible, and as a matter of fact is always more or less resisted. Paul shows in Rom. 1 and 2 that neither the Gentiles nor the Jews were living up to the light which they had. Says Shedd: "In common grace the call to believe and repent is invariably ineffectual, because man is averse to faith and repentance and in bondage to sin." [*Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, p. 99.] It is ineffectual unto salvation because it leaves the heart unchanged.

d. Special grace works in a spiritual and re-creative way, renewing the whole nature of man, and thus making man able and willing to accept the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, and to produce spiritual fruits. Common grace, to the contrary, operates only in a rational and moral way by making man in a general way receptive for the truth, by presenting motives to the will, and by appealing to the natural desires of man. This is equivalent to saying that special (saving) grace is immediate and supernatural, since it is wrought directly in the soul by the immediate energy of the Holy Spirit, while common grace is mediate, since it is the product of the mediate operation of the Holy Spirit through the truth of general or special revelation and by moral persuasion.

This conception of common grace should be carefully distinguished from that of the Arminians, who regard common grace as a link in the *ordo salutis* and ascribe to it *saving* significance. They hold that, in virtue of the common grace of God, the unregenerate man is perfectly able to perform a certain measure of spiritual good, to turn to God in faith and repentance, and thus to accept Jesus unto

salvation. They go even farther than that, and maintain that common grace by the illumination of the mind and the persuasive influence of the truth incites the sinner to accept Jesus Christ and to turn to God in faith and repentance, and will certainly achieve this end, unless the sinner obstinately resists the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Canons of Dort have this in mind where they reject the error of those who teach “that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, that is, the evangelical or saving grace, and salvation itself.”[III-IV. Rejection of errors 5.]

C. COMMON GRACE AND THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST.

The question naturally arises, whether the manifestation of common grace is in any way connected with the atoning work of Christ. As far as we know, Dr. Kuyper does not posit such a connection. According to him Christ as the Mediator of creation, the light that lighteth every man coming into the world, is the source of common grace. This means that the blessings of common grace flow from the work of creation. But this hardly suffices to answer the question, how it is to be explained that a holy and just God extends grace to, and bestows favors upon, sinners who have forfeited everything, even when they have no share in the righteousness of Christ and prove finally impenitent. The question is exactly, How can God continue to bestow those blessings of creation on men who are under the sentence of death and condemnation? As far as the elect are concerned this question is answered by the cross of Christ, but how about the reprobate? Perhaps it can be said that it is not necessary to assume a specific judicial basis for the bestowal of common grace on man in view of the fact (a) that it does not remove the guilt of sin and therefore does not carry pardon with it; and (b) that it does not lift the sentence of condemnation, but only

postpones the execution. Perhaps the divine good pleasure to stay the revelation of His wrath and to endure “with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction,” offers a sufficient explanation for the blessings of common grace.

Reformed theologians generally hesitate to say that Christ by His atoning blood merited these blessings for the impenitent and reprobate. At the same time they do believe that important natural benefits accrue to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the reprobate also share. In every covenant transaction recorded in Scripture it appears that the covenant of grace carries with it not only spiritual but also material blessings, and those material blessings are generally of such a kind that they are naturally shared also by unbelievers. Says Cunningham: “Many blessings flow to mankind at large from the death of Christ, collaterally and incidentally, in consequence of the relation in which men, viewed collectively, stand to each other.” [*Hist. Theol.* II, p. 333.] And it is but natural that this should be so. If Christ was to save an elect race, gradually called out of the world of humanity in the course of centuries, it became necessary for God to exercise forbearance, to check the course of evil, to promote the development of the natural powers of man, to keep alive within the hearts of men a desire for civil righteousness, for external morality and good order in society, and to shower untold blessings upon mankind in general. Dr. Hodge expresses it thus: “It is very plain that any plan designed to secure the salvation of an elect portion of a race propagated by generation and living in association, as is the case with mankind, cannot secure its end without greatly affecting, for better or for worse, the character and destiny of all the rest of the race not elected.” He quotes Dr. Candlish to the effect that “the entire history of the human race, from the apostasy to the final judgment, is a dispensation of forbearance in respect to the reprobate, in which many blessings, physical and moral, affecting their characters and destinies forever, accrue even to the heathen, and many more to the educated and refined citizens of Christian communities. These come

to them through the mediation of Christ, and coming to them now, must have been designed for them from the beginning.”[*The Atonement*, pp. 358 f.] These general blessings of mankind, indirectly resulting from the atoning work of Christ, were not only foreseen by God, but designed by Him as blessings for all concerned. It is perfectly true, of course, that the design of God in the work of Christ pertained primarily and directly, not to the temporal well-being of men in general, but to the redemption of the elect; but secondarily and indirectly it also included the natural blessings bestowed on mankind indiscriminately. All that the natural man receives other than curse and death is an indirect result of the redemptive work of Christ.[Cf Turretin, *Opera*, *Locus XIV*, Q. XIV, par. XI; Witsius, *De Verbonden*, B. II, Kap. 9, s. 4; Cunningham, *Hist. Theol.* II, p. 332; Symington, *Atonement and Intercession*, p. 255; Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* III, p. 535; Vos, *Ger. Dogm.* III, p. 150.]

D. THE RELATION BETWEEN SPECIAL AND COMMON GRACE.

Several questions may be raised respecting this relation, of which the following are some of the most important.

1. DO SPECIAL AND COMMON GRACE DIFFER ESSENTIALLY OR ONLY IN DEGREE? Arminians recognize alongside of sufficient (common) grace the grace of evangelical obedience, but aver that these two differ only in degree and not in essence. They are both soteriological in the sense that they form part of the saving work of God. The former makes it possible for man to repent and believe, while the latter, in co-operation with the will, causes man to repent and believe. Both can be resisted, so that even the latter is not necessarily effectual unto salvation. Reformed theology, however, insists on the *essential* difference between common and special grace. Special grace is supernatural and spiritual: it removes the guilt and pollution of sin and lifts the

sentence of condemnation. Common grace, on the other hand, is natural; and while some of its forms may be closely connected with saving grace, it does not remove sin nor set man free, but merely restrains the outward manifestations of sin and promotes outward morality and decency, good order in society and civic righteousness, the development of science and art, and so on. It works only in the natural, and not in the spiritual sphere. It should be maintained therefore that, while the two are closely connected in the present life, they are yet *essentially* different, and do not differ merely in degree. No amount of common grace can ever introduce the sinner into the new life that is in Christ Jesus. However, common grace does sometimes reveal itself in forms that can hardly be distinguished by man from the manifestations of special grace as, for instance, in the case of temporal faith. Dr. Shedd does not seem to bear the essential difference between the two in mind especially when he says: "The non-elect receives common grace, and common grace would incline the human will if it were not defeated by the human will. If the sinner should make no hostile opposition, common grace would be equivalent to saving grace." In a note he adds: "To say that common grace, if not resisted by the sinner, would be equivalent to regenerating grace, is not the same as to say that common grace, if *assisted* by the sinner, would be equivalent to regenerating grace. In the first instance, God would be the sole author of regeneration; in the second He would not be." [*Dogm. Theol.* II, p. 483.] This reminds one of Lutheran theology, but the author's meaning is not entirely clear, for elsewhere he also ascribes the non-resistance of the sinner to the operation of the Holy Spirit. [*Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, p. 101.]

2. WHICH ONE OF THE TWO IS PRIMARY, COMMON OR SPECIAL GRACE? To this question it must be answered that in a temporal sense neither one of them can be said to be prior to the other. The third chapter of Genesis clearly reveals that both of them go into operation at once after the fall. Logical priority should be ascribed to special grace, however, because common grace is made subservient to this in its operation in the world.

3. DOES COMMON GRACE SERVE AN INDEPENDENT PURPOSE OR NOT? It cannot be doubted that common grace finds its purpose in part in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ; it is subservient to the execution of the plan of God in the life of the elect and in the development of the Church. But in addition to that it also serves an independent purpose, namely, to bring to light and to harness for the service of man the hidden forces of nature, and to develop the powers and talents that are latent in the human race, in order that man may ever-increasingly exercise dominion over the lower creation, to the glory of God the Creator.[Cf. Kuyper, *Gemeene Gratie* II, pp. 622,628,633; Bavinck, *De Algemeene Genade*, p. 45.]

4. DO SPECIAL AND COMMON GRACE EACH HAVE A PECULIAR SPHERE ENTIRELY DISTINCT FROM THAT OF THE OTHER? It may be said that in a certain sense special grace has its own peculiar sphere in the organized Church, though it is not necessarily limited to this, and common grace is also operative in the Church for it is granted to all men. Both operate in the world, but while common grace in the more usual sense of the term pertains to the things of the natural world and this present life, special grace bears on the things of the new creation. They cannot but influence each other. Common grace enriches the Church with its blessings; and the Church raises the fruits of common grace to a higher level by bringing them under the influence of the regenerate life.

E. THE MEANS BY WHICH COMMON GRACE OPERATES.

Several means can be distinguished by which common grace effects its work. Calvin suggests some of these when he, in speaking of the restraining influence of common grace says: "Hence, how much soever men may disguise their impurity, some are restrained only by shame, others by fear of the laws, from breaking out into many kinds of wickedness. Some aspire to an honest life, as deeming it

most conducive to their interest, while others are raised above the vulgar lot, that, by the dignity of their station, they may keep inferiors to their duty. Thus God by his providence, curbs the perverseness of nature, preventing it from breaking forth into action, yet without rendering it inwardly pure.”[*Inst.* II. 3,3.] The following are some of the most important means through which common grace effects its work.

1. THE LIGHT OF GOD’S REVELATION. This is fundamental for without it all other means would be impossible, and even if possible, would fail to function properly. We have in mind here primarily the light of God’s revelation that shines in nature and lightens every man coming into the world. It is itself the fruit of common grace, but in turn becomes a means for the further manifestation of it, since it serves to guide the conscience of the natural man. Paul speaks of the Gentiles who do by nature the things of the law, “in that they show the word of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them.” Rom. 2:14,15. Calvin in commenting on this passage says that such Gentiles “prove that there is imprinted on their hearts a discrimination and judgment by which they distinguish between what is just and unjust, between what is honest and dishonest.”[*Comm. on Romans in loco.*] In addition to this, however, it may be said that common grace in a more restricted sense also operates in the light of God’s special revelation, which is not itself the fruit of common, but of special, grace.

2. GOVERNMENTS. Of these too it may be said that they are at once the fruit and the means of common grace. According to Rom. 13 governments are ordained of God, to maintain good order in society. To resist them is to resist the ordinance of God. The ruler, says Paul, “is a minister of God to thee for good.” Rom. 13:4. He finds support in the conscience of man (verse 5) and for the rest “beareth not the sword in vain.” On this point the Belgic Confession says: “We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of

mankind, hath appointed kings, princes, and magistrates, willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency.”[Art. XXXVI.]

3. PUBLIC OPINION. The natural light that shines in the hearts of men, especially when re-enforced by the influence of God’s special revelation, results in the forming of a public opinion that is in external conformity with the law of God; and this has a tremendous influence on the conduct of men who are very sensitive to the judgment of public opinion. Naturally public opinion will be a means of common grace only when it is formed under the influence of God’s revelation. If it is not controlled by conscience, acting in harmony with the light of nature, or by the Word of God, it becomes a mighty influence for evil.

4. DIVINE PUNISHMENTS AND REWARDS. The providential arrangements of God, whereby He visits the iniquity of men upon them in this life, and rewards deeds that are in outward conformity with the divine law, serve an important purpose in curbing the evil that is in the world. punishments have a deterring effect, and the rewards serve as incentives. By these means, whatever there is of moral goodness in the world is greatly encouraged. Many shun evil and seek that which is good, not because they fear the Lord, but because they feel that good brings its own reward and best serves their interests.

F. THE FRUITS OF COMMON GRACE.

In the preceding it was already intimated that what is left to us of the light of nature, is still operative only in virtue of the common grace of God. It is one of the most important fruits of common grace, without which some of the others would not be conceivable. The following fruits may be mentioned here:

1. THE EXECUTION OF THE SENTENCE IS STAYED. God pronounced the sentence of death on the sinner. Speaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He said. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Man did eat of it, and the sentence went into execution to a certain extent, but clearly was not fully executed at once. It is due to common grace that God did not at once fully execute the sentence of death on the sinner, and does not do so now, but maintains and prolongs the natural life of man and gives him time for repentance. He does not at once cut short the life of the sinner, but affords him an opportunity to repent, thereby removing all excuse and justifying the coming manifestation of His wrath upon those who persist in sin unto the end. That God acts on this principle is abundantly evident from such passages as Isa. 48:9; Jer. 7:23-25; Luke 13:6-9; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; II Peter 3:9.

2. THE RESTRAINT OF SIN. Through the operation of common grace sin is restrained in the lives of individuals and in society. The element of corruption that entered the life of the human race is not permitted, for the present, to accomplish its disintegrating work. Calvin says: "But we ought to consider that, notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, there is some room for divine grace, such grace as, without purifying it, may lay it under internal restraint. For, did the Lord let every mind loose to wanton in its lusts, doubtless there is not a man who would not show that his nature is capable of all the crimes with which Paul charges it, (Rom. 3 compared with Ps. 14:3 ff)."[*Inst.* II. 3,3.] This restraint may be external or internal or both, but does not change the heart. There are passages of Scripture which speak of a striving of the Spirit of God with men which does not lead to repentance, Gen. 6:3; Isa. 63:10; Acts 7:51; of operations of the Spirit that are finally withdrawn, I Sam. 16:14; Heb. 6:4-6; and of the fact that in some cases God finally gives up men to the lusts of their own hearts, Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24,26,28. In addition to the preceding passages there are some which are clearly indicative of the fact that God restrains sin in various ways, such as Gen. 20:6; 31:7; Job 1:12; 2:6; II Kings 19:27,28; Rom. 13:1-4.

3. THE PRESERVATION OF SOME SENSE OF TRUTH, MORALITY AND RELIGION. It is due to common grace that man still retains some sense of the true, the good, and the beautiful, often appreciates these to a rather surprising degree, and reveals a desire for truth, for external morality, and even for certain forms of religion. Paul speaks of Gentiles who “show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them,” Rom. 2:15, and even says of those who gave free vent to their wicked lives that they knew the truth of God, though they hindered the truth in unrighteousness and exchanged it for a lie, Rom. 1:18-25. To the Athenians, who were devoid of the fear of God, he said, “Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious,” Acts 17:22. The Canons of Dort express themselves as follows on this point: “There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and true conversion that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and hinders in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.” III-IV. 4.

4. THE PERFORMANCE OF OUTWARD GOOD AND CIVIL RIGHTEOUSNESS. Common grace enables man to perform what is generally called *justitia civilis*, that is, that which is right in civil or natural affairs, in distinction from that which is right in religious matters, natural good works especially in social relations, works that are outwardly and objectively in harmony with the law of God, though entirely destitute of any spiritual quality. This is in harmony with our Reformed Confession. Art. XIV of the Belgic Confession speaks in its title of man’s incapacity to perform what is *truly* good, says that man retained only small remains of his excellent gifts, so

as to render him without excuse, and rejects only the Pelagian error that man can of himself perform spiritual or saving good. The Canons of Dort III-IV, Art. 3, speak in a similar vein: "Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of *saving* good" etc. It may be objected that the Heidelberg Catechism speaks in absolute terms when it says in Question 8 that we are incapable of doing any good unless we are regenerated. But it is quite evident from the Commentary of Ursinus himself that he would not deny that man can do civil good, but only that he can perform good works such as are defined in Question 91 of the Catechism. Reformed theologians generally maintain that the unregenerate can perform natural good, civil good, and outwardly religious good.[Cf. Calvin, *Inst.* III. 14,2; Van Maastricht, *Godgeleerdheid*, Bk. IV. 4,11,12; Voetius, *Catechisatie* I, p. 168-172; Ursinus, *Comm. on the Catechism*, *Lord's Day* II, p. 77; Charnock, *On the Attributes* II, pp. 303,304; Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* I, p. 338.] They call attention to the fact, however, that, while such works of the unregenerate are good from a material point of view, as works which God commanded, they cannot be called good from a formal point of view, since they do not spring from the right motive and do not aim at the right purpose. The Bible repeatedly speaks of works of the unregenerate as good and right, II Kings 10:29,30; 12:2 (comp. II Chron. 24:17-25); 14:3,14-16,20,27 (comp. II Chron. 25:2); Luke 6:33; Rom. 2:14,15.

5. MANY NATURAL BLESSINGS. To common grace man further owes all the natural blessings which he receives in the present life. Though he has forfeited all the blessings of God, he receives abundant tokens of the goodness of God from day to day. There are several passages of Scripture from which it appears abundantly that God showers many of His good gifts on all men indiscriminately, that is, upon the good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, such as: Gen. 17:20 (comp. vs. 18); 39:5; Ps. 145:9,15,16; Matt. 5:44,45; Luke 6:35,36; Acts 14:16,17; I Tim. 4:10. And these gifts are intended as blessings, not only for the good but also for the evil. In the light of Scripture the position is untenable

that God never blesses the reprobate, though He does give them many gifts which are good in themselves. In Gen. 39:5 we read that “Jehovah blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.” And in Matt. 5:44,45 Jesus exhorts His disciples in these words, “Bless those that curse you . . . that ye may be children of your Father who is in heaven.” This can only mean one thing, namely, that God also blesses those who curse Him. Cf. also Luke 6:35,36; Rom. 2:4.

G. OBJECTIONS TO THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF COMMON GRACE.

Several objections have been and are even now raised by some against the doctrine of common grace as it is presented in the preceding. The following are some of the most important of these:

1. Arminians are not satisfied with it, because it does not go far enough. They regard common grace as an integral part of the saving process. It is that sufficient grace that enables man to repent and believe in Jesus Christ unto salvation, *and which in the purpose of God is intended to lead men to faith and repentance*, though it may be frustrated by men. A grace that is not so intended and does not actually minister to the salvation of men is a contradiction in terms. Hence Pope, a Wesleyan Arminian, speaks of common grace in the Calvinistic system as “being universal and not particular; being necessarily, or at least actually, inoperative for salvation in the purpose of God,” and calls this a “wasted influence.” He further says: “Grace is no more grace, if it does not include the saving intention of the Giver.” [*Christian Theology* II, pp. 387 f.] But, surely, the Bible does not so limit the use of the term “grace.” Such passages as Gen. 6:8; 19:19; Ex. 33:12,16; Num. 32:5; Luke 2:40, and many others do not refer to what we call “saving grace,” nor to what the Arminian calls “sufficient grace.”

2. It is sometimes argued that the Reformed doctrine of common grace involves the doctrine of universal atonement, and therefore leads into the Arminian camp. But there is no good ground for this assertion. It neither says nor implies that it is the purpose of God to save all men through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. The objection is based particularly on the universal proclamation of the gospel, which is considered possible only on the basis of a universal atonement. It was already suggested by the Arminians themselves at the time of the Synod of Dort, when they asserted that the Reformed with their doctrine of particular atonement could not preach the gospel to all men indiscriminately. But the Synod of Dort did not recognize the implied contradiction. The Canons teach particular atonement,[II. 8.] and also require the universal proclamation of the gospel.[II. 5 and III. 8.] And this is in perfect harmony with Scripture, which teaches on the one hand, that Christ atoned only for the elect, John 10:15; Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:32,33; cf. also John 17:9; and on the other hand, that the gospel call must be extended to all men indiscriminately, Matt. 22:2-14; 28:19; Mark 16:15,16. If it be objected that we cannot fully harmonize the indiscriminate and sincere offer of salvation on condition of faith and repentance with the doctrine of particular atonement, this may be admitted but with the distinct understanding that the truth of a doctrine does not depend on our ability to harmonize it with every other doctrine of Scripture.

3. Another objection to the doctrine of common grace is that it presupposes a certain favorable disposition in God even to reprobate sinners, while we have no right to assume such a disposition in God. This stricture takes its starting point in the eternal counsel of God, in His election and reprobation. Along the line of His election God reveals His love, grace, mercy, and longsuffering, leading to salvation; and in the historical realization of His reprobation He gives expression only to His aversion, disfavor, hatred, and wrath, leading to destruction. But this looks like a rationalistic over-simplification of the inner life of God, which does not take sufficient account of His self-revelation. In speaking

on this subject we ought to be very careful and allow ourselves to be guided by the explicit statements of Scripture rather than by our bold inferences from the secret counsel of God. There is far more in God than we can reduce to our logical categories. Are the elect in this life the objects of God's love only, and never in any sense the objects of His wrath? Is Moses thinking of the reprobate when he says: "For we are consumed in thine anger, and in thy wrath are we troubled"? Ps. 90:7. Does not the statement of Jesus that the wrath of God *abideth* on them that obey not the Son imply that it is removed from the others when, *and not until*, they submit to the beneficent rule of Christ? John 3:36. And does not Paul say to the Ephesians that they "were by nature children of wrath even as the rest"? Eph. 2:3. Evidently the elect can not be regarded as *always* and *exclusively* the objects of God's love. And if they who are the objects of God's redeeming love can also in some sense of the word be regarded as the objects of His wrath, why should it be impossible that they who are the objects of His wrath should also in some sense share His divine favor? A father who is also a judge may loathe the son that is brought before him as a criminal, and feel constrained to visit his judicial wrath upon him, but may yet pity him and show him acts of kindness while he is under condemnation. Why should this be impossible in God? General Washington hated the traitor that was brought before him and condemned him to death, but at the same time showed him compassion by serving him with the dainties from his own table. Cannot God have compassion even on the condemned sinner, and bestow favors upon him? The answer need not be uncertain, since the Bible clearly teaches that He showers untold blessings upon all men and also clearly indicates that these are the expression of a favorable disposition in God, which falls short, however, of the positive volition to pardon their sin, to lift their sentence, and to grant them salvation. The following passages clearly point to such a favorable disposition: Prov. 1:24; Isa. 1:18; Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Matt. 5:43-45; 23:37; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:35; Rom. 2:4; I Tim. 2:4. If such passages do not testify to a favorable disposition in God, it

would seem that language has lost its meaning, and that God's revelation is not dependable on this subject.

4. Anabaptists object to the doctrine of common grace, because it involves the recognition of good elements in the natural order of things, and this is contrary to their fundamental position. They regard the natural creation with contempt, stress the fact that Adam was of the earth earthy, and see only impurity in the natural order as such. Christ established a new supernatural order of things, and to that order the regenerate man, who is not merely a renewed, but an entirely new man, also belongs. He has nothing in common with the world round about him and should therefore take no part in its life: never swear an oath, take no part in war, recognize no civil authority, avoid worldly clothing, and so on. On this position there is no other grace than saving grace. This view was shared by Labadism, Pietism, the Moravian brethren, and several other sects. Barth's denial of common grace seems to be following along these same lines. This is no wonder, since for him too creaturliness and sinfulness are practically identical. Brunner gives the following summary of Barth's view: "It follows from the acknowledgment of Christ as the only saving grace of God that there exists no creative and sustaining grace which has been operative ever since the creation of the world and which manifests itself to us in God's maintenance of the world, since in that case we should have to recognize two or even three kinds of grace, and that would stand in contradistinction with the singleness of the grace of Christ. . . . Similarly, the new creation is in no wise a fulfilment but exclusively a replacement accomplished by a complete annihilation of what went before, a *substitution* of the new man for the old. The proposition, *gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*, is not true in any sense but is altogether an arch-heresy." [*Natur und Gnade*, p. 8.] Brunner rejects this view and is more in line with the Reformed thought on this point.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Do the Hebrew and Greek words for 'grace' always denote saving grace? Are they ever

used as a designation of what we call 'common grace'? Does the doctrine of common grace presuppose the doctrine of universal atonement? Does it imply a denial of the fact that man is by nature subject to the wrath of God? Does it involve a denial of man's total depravity, and of his inability to do spiritual good? Is the good which the natural man can do good only in the sight of man or also in the sight of God? Does the doctrine of common grace destroy the antithesis between the world and the kingdom of God? If not, how do you explain this?

LITERATURE: Calvin, *Institutes* II. 2 and 3; Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*; Bavinck, *De Algemeene Genade*; *ibid.*, *Calvin and Common Grace* (in, *Calvin and the Reformation*); Shedd, *Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, pp. 96-106; *ibid.*, *Dogm. Theol.* I, pp. 432, 435; II, pp. 483 ff.; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* II, pp. 654-675; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 11-17; Alexander, *Syst. of Bib. Theol.* II. pp. 343-361; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 583-588; *ibid.*, *Discussions*, pp. 282-313 (*God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy*); H. Kuiper, *Calvin on Common Grace*; Berkhof, *De Drie Punten in Alle Deelen Gereformeerd*; Hepp, Art. *Gemeene Gratie* in the *Christelijke Encyclopaedie*.

IV. The Mystical Union

Calvin repeatedly expresses the idea that the sinner cannot share in the saving benefits of Christ's redemptive work, unless he be in union with Him, and thus emphasizes a very important truth. As Adam was the representative head of the old humanity, so Christ is the representative head of the new humanity. All the blessings of the covenant of grace flow from Him who is the Mediator of the covenant. Even the very first blessing of the saving grace of God which we receive already presupposes a union with the Person of the Mediator. It is exactly at this point that we find one of the most characteristic differences between the operations and blessings of special and those of common grace. The former can be received and enjoyed only by those who are in union with Christ, while the latter can be and are enjoyed also by those who are not reckoned in Christ, and therefore are not one with Him. Every spiritual blessing which believers receive flows to them out of Christ. Hence Jesus in speaking of the coming Paraklete could say unto His disciples: "He shall glorify me; for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you," John 16:14. Subjectively, the union between Christ and believers is effected by the Holy Spirit in a mysterious and supernatural way, and for that reason is generally designated as the *unio mystica* or mystical union.

A. NATURE OF THE MYSTICAL UNION.

Lutherans generally treat the doctrine of the mystical union *anthropologically*, and therefore conceive of it as established by faith. Hence they naturally take it up at a later point in their soteriology. But this method fails to do full justice to the idea of our union with Christ, since it loses sight of the eternal basis of the union and of its objective realization in Christ, and deals exclusively with the subjective realization of it in our lives, and even so only

with our personal conscious entrance into this union. Reformed theology, on the other hand, deals with the union of believers with Christ *theologically*, and as such does far greater justice to this important subject. In doing so it employs the term “mystical union” in a broad sense as a designation not only of the subjective union of Christ and believers, but also of the union that lies back of it, that is basic to it, and of which it is only the culminating expression, namely, the federal union of Christ and those who are His in the counsel of redemption, the mystical union ideally established in that eternal counsel, and the union as it is objectively effected in the incarnation and the redemptive work of Christ.

1. THE FEDERAL UNION OF CHRIST WITH THOSE WHOM THE FATHER HAS GIVEN HIM, IN THE COUNSEL OF REDEMPTION. In the counsel of peace Christ voluntarily took upon Himself to be the Head and Surety of the elect, destined to constitute the new humanity, and as such to establish their righteousness before God by paying the penalty for their sin and by rendering perfect obedience to the law and thus securing their title to everlasting life. In that eternal covenant the sin of His people was imputed to Christ, and His righteousness was imputed to them. This imputation of the righteousness of Christ to His people in the counsel of redemption is sometimes represented as a justification from eternity. It is certainly the eternal basis of our justification by faith, and is the ground on which we receive all spiritual blessings and the gift of life eternal. And this being so, it is basic to the whole of soteriology, and even to the first stages in the application of the work of redemption, such as regeneration and internal calling.

2. THE UNION OF LIFE IDEALLY ESTABLISHED IN THE COUNSEL OF REDEMPTION. In the case of the first Adam there was not only a federal, but also a natural and organic union between him and his descendants. There was the tie of a common life between him and all his progeny, and this made it possible that the blessings of the covenant of works, if these had eventuated, could have been passed on to the whole organism of mankind in an

organic way. A somewhat similar situation obtained in the case of the last Adam as the representative Head of the covenant of redemption. Like the first Adam, He did not represent a conglomeration of disjointed individuals, but a body of men and women who were to derive their life from Him, to be united by spiritual ties, and thus to form a spiritual organism. Ideally this body, which is the Church, was already formed in the covenant of redemption, and formed in union with Christ, and this union made it possible that all the blessings merited by Christ could be passed on to those whom He represented in an organic way. They were conceived of as a glorious body, a new humanity, sharing the life of Jesus Christ. It was in virtue of that union, as it was realized in the course of history, that Christ could say: "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me," Heb. 2:13.

3. THE UNION OF LIFE OBJECTIVELY REALIZED IN CHRIST. In virtue of the legal or representative union established in the covenant of redemption Christ became incarnate as the substitute for His people, to merit all the blessings of salvation for them. Since His children were sharers in flesh and blood, "He also in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. 2:14,15. He could merit salvation for them just because He already stood in relation to them as their Surety and Mediator, their Head and Substitute. The whole Church was included in Him as her Head. In an objective sense she was crucified with Christ, she died with Him, she arose in Him from the dead, and was made to sit with Him in the heavenly places. All the blessings of saving grace lie ready for the Church in Christ; man can add nothing to them; and they now only await their subjective application by the operation of the Holy Spirit, which is also merited by Christ and is sure of progressive realization in the course of history.

4. THE UNION OF LIFE SUBJECTIVELY REALIZED BY THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The work of Christ was not finished when He had merited salvation for His people and had obtained actual possession of the blessings of salvation. In the counsel of redemption He took it upon Himself to put all His people in possession of all these blessings, and He does this through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who takes all things out of Christ, and gives them unto us. We should not conceive of the subjective realization of the mystical union in the Church atomistically, as if it were effected by bringing now this and then that individual sinner to Christ. It should be seen from the point of view of Christ. Objectively, the whole Church is in Him, and is born out of Him as the Head. It is not a mechanism, in which the parts precede the whole, but an organism, in which the whole is prior to the parts. The parts come forth out of Christ through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and then continue in living relationship with Him. Jesus calls attention to this organic relationship when He says: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing," John 15:5. In view of what was said, it is quite evident that it is not correct to say that the mystical union is the fruit of man's believing acceptance of Christ, as if faith were not one of the blessings of the covenant which flow unto us from the fulness of Christ, but a condition which man must meet partly or wholly in his own strength, in order to enter into living relationship with Jesus Christ. Faith is first of all a gift of God, and as such a part of the treasures that are hidden in Christ. It enables us to appropriate on our part what is given unto us in Christ, and to enter ever-increasingly into conscious enjoyment of the blessed union with Christ, which is the source of all our spiritual riches.

This union may be defined as *that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation.* That it is a very intimate union appears abundantly from the figures that are used in Scripture to describe it. It is a union as of the vine

and the branches, John 15:5, as of a foundation and the building that is reared on it, I Pet. 2:4,5, as of husband and wife, Eph. 5:23-32, and as of the head and the members of the body, Eph. 4:15,16. And even these figures fail to give full expression to the reality. It is a union that passes understanding. Says Dr. Hodge: “The technical designation of this union in theological language is ‘mystical,’ because it so far transcends all the analogies of earthly relationships, in the intimacy of its connection, in the transforming power of its influence, and in the excellence of its consequences.”[*Outlines of Theology*, p. 483.] If the discussion of this aspect of the mystical union is taken up first of all in the *ordo salutis*, it should be borne in mind (a) that it would seem to be desirable to consider it in connection with what precedes it, ideally in the counsel of redemption, and objectively in the work of Christ; and (b) that the order is logical rather than chronological. Since the believer is “a new creature” (II Cor. 5:17), or is “justified” (Acts 13:39) only in Christ, union with Him logically precedes both regeneration and justification by faith, while yet, chronologically, the moment when we are united with Christ is also the moment of our regeneration and justification.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MYSTICAL UNION.

From the preceding it appears that the term “mystical union” can be, and often is, used in a broad sense, including the various aspects (legal, objective, subjective) of the union between Christ and believers. Most generally, however, it denotes only the crowning aspect of that union, namely, its subjective realization by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and it is this aspect of it that is naturally in the foreground in soteriology. All that is said in the rest of this chapter bears on this subjective union. The following are the main characteristics of this union:

1. IT IS AN ORGANIC UNION. Christ and the believers form one body. The organic character of this union is clearly taught in such passages as John 15:5; I Cor. 6:15-19; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:15,16; 5:29,30. In this organic union Christ ministers to the believers, and the believers minister to Christ. Every part of the body serves and is served by every other part, and together they are subservient to the whole in a union that is indissoluble.

2. IT IS A VITAL UNION. In this union Christ is the vitalizing and dominating principle of the whole body of believers. It is none other than the life of Christ that indwells and animates believers, so that, to speak with Paul, "Christ is formed" in them, Gal. 4:19. By it Christ becomes the formative principle of their life, and leads it in a Godward direction, Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 4:19,20.

3. IT IS A UNION MEDIATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit was in a special capacity a part of the Mediator's reward, and as such was poured out on the day of Pentecost for the formation of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit Christ now dwells in believers, unites them to Himself, and knits them together in a holy unity, I Cor. 6:17; 12:13; II Cor. 3:17,18; Gal. 3:2,3.

4. IT IS A UNION THAT IMPLIES RECIPROCAL ACTION. The initial act is that of Christ, who unites believers to himself by regenerating them and thus producing faith in them. On the other hand, the believer also unites himself to Christ by a conscious act of faith, and continues the union, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by the constant exercise of faith, John 14:23; 15:4,5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17.

5. IT IS A PERSONAL UNION. Every believer is personally united directly to Christ. The representation that the life which is in the Church through Christ flows from the Church into the individual believer is decidedly unScriptural, not only in its sacramentarian but also in its pantheistic form (Rome,

Schleiermacher, and many modern theologians). Every sinner who is regenerated is directly connected with Christ and receives his life from Him. Consequently the Bible always emphasizes the bond with Christ, John 14:20; 15:1-7; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17,18.

6. IT IS A TRANSFORMING UNION. By this union believers are changed into the image of Christ *according to his human nature*. What Christ effects in His people is in a sense a replica or reproduction of what took place with Him. Nor only objectively, but also in a subjective sense they suffer, bear the cross, are crucified, die, and are raised in newness of life, with Christ. They share in a measure the experiences of their Lord, Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:24; 2:12; 3:1; I Pet. 4:13.

C. ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF THE MYSTICAL UNION.

There are several erroneous conceptions of the mystical union, against which we should be on our guard. Errors on this point should not be regarded as inconsequential and therefore unimportant, for they are fraught with danger for a true understanding of the Christian life.

1. RATIONALISTIC ERROR. We must avoid the error of the Rationalist who would identify the mystical union with the union of Christ as the Logos with the whole creation or with the immanence of God in all human spirits. This is found in the following statement, which A. H. Strong quotes from Campbell, *The indwelling Christ*: "In the immanence of Christ in nature we find the ground of his immanence in human nature. . . . A man may be out of Christ, but Christ is never out of him. Those who banish him he does not abandon." In this view the mystical union is robbed of its soteriological significance.

2. MYSTICAL ERROR. Another dangerous error is that of the Mystics who understand the mystical union as an identification of the believer with Christ. According to this view there is in it a union of essence, in which the personality of the one is simply merged into that of the other, so that Christ and the believer do not remain two distinct persons. Even some of the Lutherans went to that extreme. One extremist did not hesitate to say, "I am Christ Jesus, the living Word of God; I have redeemed thee by my sinless sufferings."

3. SOCINIAN AND ARMINIAN ERROR. Quite another extreme is found in the teachings of Socinians and Arminians, who represent the mystical union as a mere moral union, or a union of love and sympathy, like that existing between a teacher and his pupils or between friend and friend. Such a union does not involve any interpenetration of the life of Christ and that of believers. It would involve no more than loving adherence to Christ, friendly service freely rendered to him, and ready acceptance of the message of the Kingdom of God. It is a union that does not call for a Christ within us.

4. SACRAMENTARIAN ERROR. Another error to be avoided is that of the sacramentarians, represented by the Roman Catholic Church and by some Lutherans and High Church Episcopalians. Strong speaks of this as "perhaps the most pernicious misinterpretation of the nature of this union." It makes the grace of God something substantial, of which the Church is the depository, and which can be passed on in the sacraments; and completely loses sight of the fact that the sacraments cannot effect this union, because they already presuppose it.

D. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MYSTICAL UNION.

1. The mystical union in the sense in which we are now speaking of it is not the judicial ground, on the basis of which we become partakers of the riches that are in Christ. It is sometimes said that the merits of Christ cannot be imputed to us as long as we are not in Christ, since it is only on the basis of our oneness with Him that such an imputation could be reasonable. But this view fails to distinguish between our legal unity with Christ and our spiritual oneness with Him, and is a falsification of the fundamental element in the doctrine of redemption, namely, of the doctrine of justification. Justification is always a declaration of God, not on the basis of an existing condition, but on that of a gracious imputation, — a declaration which is not in harmony with the existing condition of the sinner. The judicial ground for all the special grace which we receive lies in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is freely imputed to us.

2. But this state of affairs, namely, that the sinner has nothing in himself and receives everything freely from Christ, must be reflected in the consciousness of the sinner. And this takes place through the mediation of the mystical union. While the union is effected when the sinner is renewed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, he does not become cognizant of it and does not actively cultivate it until the conscious operation of faith begins. Then he becomes aware of the fact that he has no righteousness of his own, and that the righteousness by which he appears just in the sight of God is imputed to him. But even so something additional is required. The sinner must feel his dependence on Christ in the very depths of his being, — in the sub-conscious life. Hence he is incorporated in Christ, and as a result experiences that all the grace which he receives flows from Christ. The constant feeling of dependence thus engendered, is an antidote against all self-righteousness.

3. The mystical union with Christ also secures for the believer the continuously transforming power of the life of Christ, not only in the soul but also in the body. The soul is gradually renewed in the

image of Christ, as Paul expresses it, “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” II Cor. 3:18. And the body is consecrated in the present to be a fit instrument of the renewed soul, and will at last be raised up in the likeness of Christ’s glorified body, Phil. 3:21. Being in Christ, believers share in all the blessings which He merited for his people. He is for them a perennial fountain springing into everlasting life.

4. In virtue of this union believers have fellowship with Christ. Just as Christ shared the labours, the sufferings, and the temptations of His people, they are now made to share His experiences. His sufferings are, in a measure, reproduced and completed in the lives of His followers. They are crucified with Him, and also arise with Him in newness of life. The final triumph of Christ also becomes their triumph. Rom. 6:5,8; 8:17; II Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:13.

5. Finally, the union of believers with Christ furnishes the basis for the spiritual unity of all believers, and consequently for the communion of the saints. They are animated by the same spirit, are filled with the same love, stand in the same faith, are engaged in the same warfare, and are bound for the same goal. Together they are interested in the things of Christ and His Church, of God and His Kingdom. John 17:20,21; Acts 2:42; Rom. 12:15; Eph. 4:2,3; Col. 3:16; I Thess. 4:18; 5:11; Heb. 3:13; 10:24,25; Jas. 5:16; I John 1:3,7.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What is the meaning of the term ‘mystical’ as applied to the union with Christ? What is the relation between grace in the legal, and that in the moral sphere? How should we answer the contention that the sinner cannot become a participant in the blessings of God’s special grace until he is subjectively incorporated in Christ? What can be said in reply to the assertion that faith precedes regeneration, because it effects the union with Christ, while regeneration is the fruit of this union? Does the mystical union suppress or does it preserve the personality of man? Cf. Eph. 4:13. Do all believers derive equal benefits from this union? If this union is indissoluble, how must John 15:1-7 be

understood? What is Schleiermacher's conception of the believer's union with Christ?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* III, pp. 594 f.; IV, pp. 114, 226 f., 268 f.; Kuyper, *Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest* II, pp. 163-182; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 612-617; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 795-808; Dick, *Theol.*, pp. 36-365; Hodge, *Outlines*, pp. 482-486; *ibid.*, *The Atonement*, pp. 198-211; McPherson, *Chr. Theol.*, pp. 402-404; Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 275-277; Schmid, *Doct. Theol.*, pp. 485-491; Litton, *Introd. to Dogm. Theol.*, pp. 321-322.

V. Calling in General and External Calling

A. REASONS FOR DISCUSSING CALLING FIRST.

The question of the relative order of calling and regeneration has frequently been discussed, and the discussion has often suffered from a lack of discrimination and a resulting misunderstanding. The terms “calling” and “regeneration” were not always used in the same sense. Consequently, it was possible to maintain, without inconsistency, on the one hand that calling precedes regeneration, and on the other, that regeneration is prior to calling. We shall briefly consider (1) the representations found in Scripture and in our confessional standards; (2) the order generally followed by Reformed theologians; and (3) the reasons that may be advanced in favor of a separate discussion of the external calling through the Word, as preceding both regeneration and internal calling.

1. THE BIBLICAL REPRESENTATION. The Biblical order is chiefly indicated in a few well known passages. There is first of all the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1-14. While Ezekiel prophesied over the dry bones of the house of Israel, the breath of life came into them. This passage refers to the civil restoration and the spiritual revival of the house of Israel, and probably also contains a hint respecting the resurrection of its dead. It represents the prophetic word as preceding the origin of the new life of the people of Israel. Naturally, this does not yet mean that the former was causally related to the latter. . . . A very instructive passage is found in Acts 16:14, which speaks of the conversion of Lydia. During the preaching of Paul the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to give heed to the things that were spoken by the apostle. It is clearly

intimated that the opening of the heart is preceded by the external, and is followed by the internal calling. The unity of the twofold calling is clearly seen. . . . The statement of Paul in Rom. 4:17 is also frequently quoted in this connection, but can hardly be considered relevant, because it does not refer to either the external or the internal calling by the preaching of the Word of God, but either to the creative fiat of God, by which things are called into being, or to His command issued to things that are not, as though they were, and reaching even the dead. . . . Another passage is found in James 1:18, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." It can hardly be doubted that the word of truth mentioned here is the word of preaching, and the assumption is that this word precedes the new birth and is in some sense instrumental to it. . . . And, finally, there is a well known passage in I Pet. 1:23, in which the apostle speaks of believers as "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth." In view of verse 25 the word here referred to can hardly be anything else than the word of the gospel preached among the readers. This word of Peter too implies that the word of preaching precedes regeneration and is instrumentally connected with it. In view of these passages the conclusion is perfectly warranted that in the case of adults external calling by the preaching of the word generally precedes regeneration. Whether they also warrant the assertion that internal calling is prior to the implanting of the new life, is a question that need not be considered at this point.

2. THE VIEW REPRESENTED IN OUR CONFSSIONAL STANDARDS. Our confessional standards also imply that in the case of adults the preaching of the word precedes regeneration, but it should be borne in mind that they do not use the word "regeneration" in the limited sense in which it is employed to-day. The Belgic Confession says in Art. XXIV: "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the

bondage of sin.” Faith is wrought in man by the hearing of the Word and, in turn, works regeneration, that is, the renewal of man in conversion and sanctification. The Canons of Dort contain a somewhat more detailed description in III and IV, Articles 11 and 12: “But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illumines their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the innermost recesses of the man; . . . And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead; a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is nowise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted,” etc. In these articles the words “regeneration” and “conversion” are used interchangeably. It is quite evident, however, that they denote the fundamental change in the governing disposition of the soul as well as the resulting change in the outward manifestations of life. And this change is brought about not merely, but at least in part, by the preaching of the gospel. Consequently this precedes.

3. THE ORDER GENERALLY FOLLOWED BY REFORMED THEOLOGIANS. Among the Reformed it has been quite customary to place calling before regeneration, though a few have reversed the order. Even Maccovius, Voetius, and Comrie, all Supralapsarians, follow the usual order. Several considerations prompted Reformed theologians in general to place calling before regeneration.

a. *Their doctrine of the covenant of grace.* They considered the covenant of grace as the great and all-comprehensive good which God in infinite mercy grants unto sinners, a good including all the blessings of salvation, and therefore also regeneration. But this

covenant is inseparably connected with the gospel. It is announced and made known in the gospel, of which Christ is the living center, and therefore does not exist without it. Where the gospel is not known the covenant is not realized, but where it is preached God establishes His covenant and glorifies His grace. Both the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the covenant precede the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's participation in the salvation wrought by Christ.

b. *Their conception of the relation between the work of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit.* The Anabaptists failed to do justice to this relation. Christ and His redemptive work are presented to us in the gospel. And it is from Christ, as the Mediator of God and man and as the meritorious cause of our salvation, that the Holy Spirit derives everything which He communicates to sinners. Consequently, He joins His work to the preaching of the gospel and operates in a saving way only where the divine message of redemption is brought. The Holy Spirit does not work apart from the Christ presented in the gospel.

c. *Their reaction against the mysticism of the Anabaptists.* The Anabaptists proceeded on the assumption that regeneration effected not merely a renewal of human nature, but an entirely new creation. And this being so, they regarded it as impossible that anything belonging to this natural creation as, for instance, the human language in which the Word of God is brought to man, could in any way be instrumental in communicating the new life to sinners. As they saw it, regeneration *eo ipso* excluded the use of the Word as a means, since this was after all only a dead letter. This mystical tendency was strongly opposed by Reformed theologians.

d. *Their experience in connection with the spiritual renewal of adults.* While it was a settled opinion that covenant children who die in infancy are reborn and therefore saved, there was no unanimous opinion as to the time when those who grew up became partakers of the grace of regeneration. Some shared the opinion of

Voetius that all elect children are regenerated before baptism, and that the new life can, even in adults, remain concealed for many years. The great majority, however, were loath to take that position, and held that the new life, if present, would reveal itself in some way. Experience taught them that many gave no evidences of the new life until after they had heard the gospel for many years.

4. REASONS FOR A SEPARATE DISCUSSION OF EXTERNAL CALLING AS PRECEDING REGENERATION.

a. *Clearness of presentation.* External and internal calling are essentially one; yet they can and should be carefully distinguished. A dispute may arise respecting the one that does not directly concern the other. It may be doubted, whether internal calling logically precedes regeneration in the case of adults, while there is no uncertainty whatsoever in this respect concerning the external calling through the gospel. Hence it may be considered desirable to treat of the external calling first, and then to take up the discussion of internal calling in connection with that of regeneration.

b. *The preparatory nature of external calling.* If we proceed on the assumption that the *ordo salutis* deals with the effective application of the redemption wrought by Christ, we feel at once that the external calling by the Word of God can, strictly speaking, hardly be called one of its stages. As long as this calling does not, through the accompanying operation of the Holy Spirit, turn into an internal and effectual calling, it has only a preliminary and preparatory significance. Several Reformed theologians speak of it as a kind of common grace, since it does not flow from the eternal election and the saving grace of God, but rather from His common goodness; and since, while it sometimes produces a certain illumination of the mind, it does not enrich the heart with the saving grace of God.[Cf. references above, pp. 304 f. and also a Marck, *Godgeleerdheid*. XXIII. 3.]

c. *The general nature of external calling.* While all the other movements of the Holy Spirit in the *ordo salutis* terminate on the elect only, the external calling by the gospel has a wider bearing. Wherever the gospel is preached, the call comes to the elect and the reprobate alike. It serves the purpose, not merely of bringing the elect to faith and conversion, but also of revealing the great love of God to sinners in general. By means of it God maintains His claim on the obedience of all His rational creatures, restrains the manifestation of sin, and promotes civic righteousness, external morality, and even outward religious exercises.[Cf. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 7 f.]

B. CALLING IN GENERAL.

Since external calling is but an aspect of calling in general, we shall have to consider this briefly before entering upon a discussion of external calling.

1. THE AUTHOR OF OUR CALLING. Our calling is a work of the triune God. It is first of all a work of the Father, I Cor. 1:9; I Thess. 2:12; I Pet. 5:10. But the Father works all things through the Son; and so this calling is also ascribed to the Son, Matt. 11:28; Luke 5:32; John 7:37; Rom. 1:6(?). And Christ, in turn, calls through His Word and Spirit, Matt. 10:20; John 15:26; Acts 5:31,32.

2. VOCATIO REALIS AND VERBALIS. Reformed theologians generally speak of a *vocatio realis*, as distinguished from the *vocatio verbalis*. By this they mean the external call that comes to men through God's general revelation, a revelation of the law and not of the gospel, to acknowledge, fear, and honour God as their Creator. It comes to them in things (*res*) rather than in words: in nature and history, in the environment in which they live, and in the experiences and vicissitudes of their lives, Ps. 19:1-4; Acts 16:16,17; 17:27; Rom. 1:19-21; 2:14,15. This call knows nothing of Christ, and therefore cannot lead to salvation. At the same time it is

of the greatest importance in connection with the restraint of sin, the development of the natural life, and the maintenance of good order in society. This is not the calling with which we are concerned at present. In soteriology only the *vocatio verbalis* comes into consideration; and this may be defined as *that gracious act of God whereby He invites sinners to accept the salvation that is offered in Christ Jesus.*

3. DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIO VERBALIS. The *vocatio verbalis* is, as the term itself suggests, the divine call that comes to man through the preaching of the Word of God. According to Roman Catholics it can also come to man through the administration of baptism. In fact, they regard the sacrament as the most important means in bringing man to Christ, and ascribe a decidedly subordinate significance to the preaching of the gospel. Not the pulpit, but the altar is central with Rome. In course of time considerable difference of opinion became apparent on the question, why the gospel call proves efficacious in some cases and not in others. Pelagius sought the explanation for this in the arbitrary will of man. Man has by nature a perfectly free will, so that he can accept or reject the gospel, as he sees fit, and thus either obtain or fail to obtain the blessings of salvation. Augustine, on the other hand, ascribed the difference to the operation of the grace of God. Said he: "The hearing of the divine call, is produced by divine grace itself, in him who before resisted; and then the love of virtue is kindled in him when he no longer resists." Semi-Pelagianism sought to mediate between the two and to avoid both the Augustinian denial of free will and the Pelagian depreciation of divine grace. It assumed the presence of the seeds of virtue in man, which of themselves tended to bear good fruit, but held that these needed the fructifying influence of divine grace for their development. The grace necessary for this is given to all men gratuitously, so that they are with the aid of it able to accept the gospel call unto salvation. The call will therefore be effective provided man, aided by divine grace, accepts it. This became the prevailing doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Some later

Roman Catholics, of whom Bellarmine was one of the most important, brought in the doctrine of congruism, in which the acceptance of the gospel call is made dependent on the circumstances in which it comes to man. If these are congruous, that is, fit or favorable, he will accept it, but if not, he will reject it. The character of the circumstances will, of course, largely depend on the operation of prevenient grace. Luther developed the idea that, while the law worked repentance, the gospel call carried with it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in the Word, and therefore the call is in itself always sufficient and in its intention always efficacious. The reason why this call does not always effect the desired and intended result lies in the fact that men in many cases place a stumbling block in the way, so that, after all, the result is determined by the negative attitude of man. While some Lutherans still speak of external and internal calling, they insist on it that the former never comes to man apart from the latter. The call is essentially always efficacious, so that there is really no room for the distinction. Luther's strong insistence on the efficacious character of the gospel call was due to the Anabaptist depreciation of it. The Anabaptists virtually set aside the Word of God as a means of grace, and stressed what they called the internal word, the "inner light," and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. To them the external word was but the letter that killeth, while the internal word was spirit and life. External calling meant little or nothing in their scheme. The distinction between external and internal calling is already found in Augustine, was borrowed from him by Calvin, and thus made prominent in Reformed theology. According to Calvin the gospel call is not in itself effective, but is made efficacious by the operation of the Holy Spirit, when He savingly applies the Word to the heart of man; and it is so applied only in the hearts and lives of the elect. Thus the salvation of man remains the work of God from the very beginning. God by His saving grace, not only enables, but causes man to heed the gospel call unto salvation. The Arminians were not satisfied with this position, but virtually turned back to the Semi-Pelagianism of the Roman Catholic Church. According to them the universal proclamation of the gospel is accompanied by a universal

sufficient grace, — “gracious assistance actually and universally bestowed, sufficient to enable all men, if they choose, to attain to the full possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation.”[Cunningham, *Hist. Theol.* II, p. 396.] The work of salvation is once more made dependent on man. This marked the beginning of a rationalistic return to the Pelagian position, which entirely denies the necessity of an internal operation of the Holy Spirit unto salvation.

C. EXTERNAL CALLING.

The Bible does not use the term “external,” but clearly speaks of a calling that is not efficacious. It is presupposed in the great commission, as it is found in Mark 16:15,16, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” The parable of the marriage feast in Matt. 22:2-14 clearly teaches that some who were invited did not come, and concludes with the well-known words: “For many are called, but few chosen.” The same lesson is taught in the parable of the great supper, Luke 14:16-24. Other passages speak explicitly of a rejection of the gospel, John 3:36; Acts 13:46; II Thess. 1:8. Still others speak of the terrible sin of unbelief in a way which clearly shows that it was committed by some, Matt. 10:15; 11:21-24; John 5:40; 16:8,9; I John 5:10. The external call consists *in the presentation and offering of salvation in Christ to sinners, together with an earnest exhortation to accept Christ by faith, in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.*

1. THE ELEMENTS COMPRISED IN IT.

a. *A presentation of the gospel facts and of the doctrine of redemption.* The way of redemption revealed in Christ must be set forth clearly in all its relations. God’s plan of redemption, the saving work of Christ, and the renewing and transforming operations of

the Holy Spirit, should all be interpreted in their mutual relations. It should be borne in mind, however, that a mere presentation of the truths of redemption, no matter how well done, does not yet constitute the gospel call. It is not only fundamental to it, but even constitutes a very important part of it. At the same time it is by no means the whole of that call. According to our Reformed conception the following elements also belong to it.

b. *An invitation to accept Christ in repentance and faith.* The representation of the way of salvation must be supplemented by an earnest invitation (II Cor. 5:11,20) and even a solemn command (John 6:28,29; Acts 19:4) to repent and believe, that is to accept Christ by faith. But, in order that this coming to Christ may not be understood in a superficial sense, as it is often represented by revivalists, the true nature of the repentance and the faith required should be clearly set forth. It must be made perfectly clear that the sinner cannot of himself truly repent and believe, but that it is God who worketh in him “both to will and to work, for His good pleasure.”

c. *A promise of forgiveness and salvation.* The external call also contains a promise of acceptance for all those who comply with the conditions, not in their own strength, but by the power of the grace of God wrought in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. They who by grace repent of their sins and accept Christ by faith receive the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of eternal salvation. This promise, it should be noticed, is never absolute, but always conditional. No one can expect its fulfilment, except in the way of a faith and repentance that is truly wrought by God.

From the fact that these elements are included in external calling, it may readily be inferred that they who reject the gospel not merely refuse to believe certain facts and ideas, but resist the general operation of the Holy Spirit, which is connected with this calling, and are guilty of the sin of obstinate disobedience. By their refusal to accept the gospel, they increase their responsibility, and treasure

up wrath for themselves in the day of judgment, Rom. 2:4,5. That the above elements are actually included in the external calling, is quite evident from the following passages of Scripture: (a) According to Acts 20:27 Paul considers the declaration of the whole counsel of God as a part of the call; and in Eph. 3:7-11 he recounts some of the details which he had declared unto the readers. (b) Examples of the call to repent and believe are found in such passages as Ezek. 33:11; Mark 1:15; John 6:29; II Cor. 5:20. (c) And the promise is contained in the following passages, John 3:16-18,36; 5:24,40.[Cf. also the *Canons of Dort* II, 5,6; III and IV, 8.]

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTERNAL CALLING.

a. *It is general or universal.* This is not to be understood in the sense in which it was maintained by some of the old Lutheran theologians, namely, that that call actually came to all the living more than once in the past, as, for instance, in the time of Adam, in that of Noah, and in the days of the apostles. McPherson correctly says: "A universal call of this kind is not a fact, but a mere theory invented for a purpose." [*Chr. Dogm.* p. 377.] In this representation the terms "general" or "universal" are not used in the sense in which they are intended, when it is said that the gospel call is general or universal. Moreover, the representation is at least in part contrary to fact. External calling is general only in the sense that it comes to all men to whom the gospel is preached, indiscriminately. It is not confined to any age or nation or class of men. It comes to both the just and the unjust, the elect and the reprobate. The following passages testify to the general nature of this call: Isa. 55:1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; some ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," cf. also verses 6,7. In connection with this passage one might conceivably say that only spiritually qualified sinners are called; but this certainly cannot be said of Isa. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Some also interpret the familiar invitation of Jesus in Matt. 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” as limited to such as are truly concerned about their sins and really repentant; but there is no warrant for such a limitation. The last book of the Bible concludes with a beautiful general invitation: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely,” Rev. 22:17. That the gospel invitation is not limited to the elect, as some hold, is quite evident from such passages as Ps. 81:11-13; Prov. 1:24-26; Ezek. 3:19; Matt. 22:2-8,14; Luke 14:16-24.

The general character of this calling is also taught in the *Canons of Dort*. [II, 5; III and IV, 8.] Yet this doctrine repeatedly met with opposition by individuals and groups in the Reformed Churches. In the Scottish Church of the seventeenth century some denied the indiscriminate invitation and offer of salvation altogether, while others wanted to limit it to the confines of the visible Church. Over against these the Marrow men, such as Boston and the Erskines, defended it. In the Netherlands this point was disputed especially in the eighteenth century. They who maintained the universal offer were called preachers of the *new light*, while they who defended the particular offer, the offer to those who already gave evidence of a measure of special grace and could therefore be reckoned as among the elect, were known as the preachers of the *old light*. Even in the present day we occasionally meet with opposition on this point. It is said that such a general invitation and offer is inconsistent with the doctrine of predestination and of particular atonement, doctrines in which, it is thought, the preacher should take his starting point. But the Bible does not teach that the preacher of the gospel should take his starting point in these doctrines, however important they may be. His starting point and warrant lie in the commission of his King: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15,16. Moreover, it is an utter impossibility that anyone, in preaching the gospel, should limit himself to the elect, as some would have us do, since he does not know who they are. Jesus did know them, but He did not so

limit the offer of salvation, Matt. 22:3-8,14; Luke 14:16-21; John 5:38-40. There would be a real contradiction between the Reformed doctrines of predestination and particular atonement on the one hand, and the universal offer of salvation on the other hand, if this offer included the declaration that God purposed to save every individual hearer of the gospel, and that Christ really atoned for the sins of each one of them. But the gospel invitation involves no such declaration. It is a gracious calling to accept Christ by faith, and a *conditional* promise of salvation. The condition is fulfilled only in the elect, and therefore they only obtain eternal life.

b. *It is a bona fide calling.* The external calling is a calling in good faith, a calling that is seriously meant. It is not an invitation coupled with the hope that it will not be accepted. When God calls the sinner to accept Christ by faith, He earnestly desires this; and when He promises those who repent and believe eternal life, His promise is dependable. This follows from the very nature, from the veracity, of God. It is blasphemous to think that God would be guilty of equivocation and deception, that He would say one thing and mean another, that He would earnestly plead with the sinner to repent and believe unto salvation, and at the same time not desire it in any sense of the word. The *bona fide* character of the external call is proved by the following passages of Scripture: Num. 23:19; Ps. 81:13-16; Prov. 1:24; Isa. 1:18-20; Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Matt. 21:37; II Tim. 2:13. The Canons of Dort also assert it explicitly in III and IV, 8. Several objections have been offered to the idea of such a *bona fide* offer of salvation. (1) One objection is derived from the veracity of God. It is said that, according to this doctrine, He offers the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to those for whom He has not intended these gifts. It need not be denied that there is a real difficulty at this point, but this is the difficulty with which we are always confronted, when we seek to harmonize the decretive and the preceptive will of God, a difficulty which even the objectors cannot solve and often simply ignore. Yet we may not assume that the two are really contradictory. The decretive will of God determines what will most certainly come to pass (without

necessarily implying that God really takes delight in all of it, as, for instance, in all kinds of sin), while the preceptive will is man's rule of life, informing him as to what is well pleasing in the sight of God. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that God does not offer sinners the forgiveness of sins and eternal life unconditionally, but only in the way of faith and conversion; and that the righteousness of Christ, though not intended for all, is yet sufficient for all. (2) A second objection is derived from the spiritual inability of man. Man, as he is by nature, cannot believe and repent, and therefore it looks like mockery to ask this of him. But in connection with this objection we should remember that in the last analysis man's inability in spiritual things is rooted in his unwillingness to serve God. The actual condition of things is not such that many would like to repent and believe in Christ, if they only could. All those who do not believe are not willing to believe, John 5:40. Moreover, it is no more unreasonable to require repentance and faith in Christ of men than it is to demand of them that they keep the law. Very inconsistently some of those who oppose the general offer of salvation on the basis of man's spiritual inability, do not hesitate to place the sinner before the demands of the law and even insist on doing this.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXTERNAL CALLING. The question may be asked, why God comes to all men indiscriminately, including even the reprobate, with the offer of salvation. This external calling answers more than one purpose.

a. In it God maintains His claim on the sinner. As the sovereign Ruler of the universe He is entitled — and this is a matter of absolute right — to the service of man. And though man tore away from God in sin and is now incapable of rendering spiritual obedience to his rightful Sovereign, his wilful transgression did not abrogate the claim of God on the service of His rational creatures. The right of God to demand absolute obedience remains, and He asserts this right in both the law and the gospel. His claim on man also finds expression in the call to faith and repentance. And if man

does not heed this call, he disregards and slights the just claim of God and thereby increases his guilt.

b. It is the divinely appointed means of bringing sinners to conversion. In other words, it is the means by which God gathers the elect out of the nations of the earth. As such it must necessarily be general or universal, since no man can point out the elect. The final result is, of course, that the elect, and they only, accept Christ by faith. This does not mean that missionaries can go out and give their hearers the assurance that Christ died for each one of them and that God intends to save each one; but it does mean that they can bring the joyful tidings that Christ died for sinners, that He invites them to come unto Him, and that He offers salvation to all those who truly repent of their sins and accept him with a living faith.

c. It is also a revelation of God's holiness, goodness, and compassion. In virtue of His holiness God dissuades sinners everywhere from sin, and in virtue of His goodness and mercy He warns them against self-destruction, postpones the execution of the sentence of death, and blesses them with the offer of salvation. There is no doubt about it that this gracious offer is in itself a blessing and not, as some would have it, a curse for sinners. It clearly reveals the divine compassion for them, and is so represented in the Word of God, Ps. 81:13; Prov. 1:24; Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Amos 8:11; Matt. 11:20-24; 23:37. At the same time it is true that man by his opposition to it may turn even this blessing into a curse. It naturally heightens the responsibility of the sinner, and, if not accepted and improved, will increase his judgment.

d. Finally, it clearly accentuates the righteousness of God. If even the revelation of God in nature serves the purpose of forestalling any excuse which sinners might be inclined to make, Rom. 1:20, this is all the more true of the special revelation of the way of salvation. When sinners despise the forbearance of God and reject His

gracious offer of salvation, the greatness of their corruption and guilt, and the justice of God in their condemnation, stands out in the clearest light.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: In what cases do the Reformed assume that regeneration precedes even external calling? How do they connect external calling up with the doctrine of the covenant? On what grounds did the Arminians at the time of the Synod of Dort assert that the Reformed churches could not consistently teach that God seriously calls sinners indiscriminately to salvation? How do Roman Catholics conceive of the calling by the Word? What is the Lutheran conception of calling? Is it correct to say (with Alexander, *Syst. Theol.* II, pp. 357 ff.) that the Word by itself is adequate to effect a spiritual change, and that the Holy Spirit merely removes the obstruction to its reception?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 1-15; *ibid.*, *Roeping en Wedergeboorte* Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm.*, *De Salute*, pp. 84-92; Maastricht, *Godgeleerdheit* III, pp. 192-214 à Marck, *Godgeleerdheit*, pp. 649-651; Witsius, *De Verbonden* III, c. 5; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* II, pp. 639-653; Dabney, *Theology.*, pp. 553-559; Schmid, *Doct. Theol.*, pp. 448-456; Valentine *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 194-204; Pope, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 335-347; W. L. Alexander, *Syst. of Bibl. Theol.* II, pp. 357-361.

VI. Regeneration and Effectual Calling

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR REGENERATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS.

1. THE TERMS THAT COME INTO CONSIDERATION. The Greek word for “regeneration” (*palingenesia*) is found only in Matt. 19:28 and Titus 3:5; and only in the last named passage does it refer to the beginning of the new life in the individual Christian. The idea of this beginning is more commonly expressed by the verb *gennao* (with *anothen* in John 3:3), or its compositum *anagennao*. These words mean either *to beget, to beget again, or to bear or give birth*, John 1:13; 3:3,4,5,6,7,8; I Pet. 1:23; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18. In one passage, namely, Jas. 1:18, the word *apokueo, to bear or bring forth*, is employed. Furthermore, the thought of the production of a new life is expressed by the word *ktizo, to create*, Eph. 2:10, and the product of this creation is called a *kaine ktisis* (a new creature), II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15, or a *kainos anthropos* (a new man), Eph. 4:24. Finally, the term *suzoopoieo, to make alive with, to quicken with*, is also used in a couple of passages, Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13.

2. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE TERMS. These terms carry with them several important implications, to which attention should be directed. (a) Regeneration is a creative work of God, and is therefore *a work in which man is purely passive*, and in which there is no place for human co-operation. This is a very important point, since it stresses the fact that salvation is wholly of God. (b) The creative work of God produces a *new life*, in virtue of which man, made alive with Christ, shares the resurrection life, and can be

called a new creature, “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them,” Eph. 2:10. (c) Two elements must be distinguished in regeneration, namely, *generation or the begetting of the new life*, and *bearing or bringing forth*, by which the new life is brought forth out of its hidden depths. Generation implants the principle of the new life in the soul, and the new birth causes this principle to begin to assert itself in action. This distinction is of great importance for a proper understanding of regeneration.

B. THE USE OF THE TERM “REGENERATION” IN THEOLOGY.

1. IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND IN ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY. In the mind of the early Church the term “regeneration” did not stand for a sharply defined concept. It was used to denote a change closely connected with the washing away of sins, and no clear distinction was made between regeneration and justification. As identified with baptismal grace, the former was understood especially as a designation of the remission of sin, though the idea of a certain moral renovation was not excluded. Even Augustine did not draw a sharp line here, but did distinguish between regeneration and conversion. To him regeneration included, in addition to the remission of sin, only an *initial* change of the heart, followed by conversion later on. He conceived of it as a strictly monergistic work of God, in which the human subject cannot cooperate, and which man cannot resist. For Pelagius, of course, “regeneration” did not mean the birth of a new nature, but the forgiveness of sins in baptism, the illumination of the mind by the truth, and the stimulation of the will by divine promises. The confusion of regeneration and justification, already apparent in Augustine, became even more pronounced in Scholasticism. In fact, justification became the more prominent concept of the two, was thought of as including regeneration, and was conceived of as an act

in which God and man co-operate. Justification, according to the common representation, included the infusion of grace, that is, the birth of a new creature or regeneration, and the forgiveness of sin and the removal of the guilt attaching to it. There was a difference of opinion, however, as to which of these two elements is the logical prius. According to Thomas Aquinas the infusion of grace is first, and the forgiveness of sins is, at least in a certain sense, based on this; but according to Duns Scotus the forgiveness of sin is first, and is basic to the infusion of grace. Both elements are effected by baptism *ex opere operato*. The opinion of Thomas Aquinas gained the upper hand in the Church. Up to the present time there is a certain confusion of regeneration and justification in the Roman Catholic Church, which is, no doubt, largely due to the fact that justification is not conceived as a forensic act, but as an act or process of renewal. In it man is not *declared* but *made* just. Says Wilmers in his *Handbook of the Christian Religion*: "As justification is a spiritual renewal and regeneration, it follows that sin is really *destroyed* by it, and not, as the Reformers maintained, merely *covered*, or *no longer imputed*."

2. BY THE REFORMERS AND IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES. Luther did not entirely escape the confusion of regeneration with justification. Moreover, he spoke of regeneration or the new birth in a rather broad sense. Calvin also used the term in a very comprehensive sense as a designation of the whole process by which man is renewed, including, besides the divine act which originates the new life, also conversion (repentance and faith) and sanctification.[*Inst.* III. 3,9.] Several seventeenth century authors fail to distinguish between regeneration and conversion, and use the two terms interchangeably, treating of what we now call regeneration under vocation or effectual calling. The Canons of Dort also use the two words synonymously,[III and IV. 11,12.] and the Belgic Confession seems to speak of regeneration in an even wider sense.[Art. XXIV.] This comprehensive use of the term "regeneration" often led to confusion and to the disregard of very necessary distinctions. For instance, while regeneration and

conversion were identified, regeneration was yet declared to be monergistic, in spite of the fact that in conversion man certainly co-operates. The distinction between regeneration and justification had already become clearer, but it gradually became necessary and customary also to employ the term "regeneration" in a more restricted sense. Turretin defines two kinds of conversion: first, a "habitual" or passive conversion, the production of a disposition or habit of the soul, which, he remarks, might better be called "regeneration"; and, secondly, an "actual" or "active" conversion, in which this implanted habit or disposition becomes active in faith and repentance. In present day Reformed theology the word "regeneration" is generally used in a more restricted sense, as a designation of that divine act by which the sinner is endowed with new spiritual life, and by which the principle of that new life is first called into action. So conceived, it includes both the "begetting again" and the "new birth," in which the new life becomes manifest. In strict harmony, however, with the literal meaning of the word "regeneration" the term is sometimes employed in an even more limited sense, to denote simply the implanting of the new life in the soul, apart from the first manifestations of this life. In modern liberal theology the term "regeneration" acquired a different meaning. Schleiermacher distinguished two aspects of regeneration, namely, conversion and justification, and held that in regeneration "a new religious consciousness is produced in the believer by the common Christian spirit of the community, and new life, or 'sanctification,' is prepared for." (Pfleiderer.) That "Christian spirit of the community" is the result of an influx of the divine life, through Christ, into the Church, and is called "the Holy Spirit" by Schleiermacher. The Modern view is well stated in these words of Youtz: "Modern interpretation inclines to return to the symbolical use of the conception of Regeneration. Our ethical realities deal with transformed characters. Regeneration expresses thus a radical, vital, ethical change, rather than an absolutely new metaphysical beginning. Regeneration is a vital step in the natural development of the spiritual life, a radical readjustment to the moral processes of life." [A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics,

Art. *Regeneration.*] Students of the Psychology of Religion generally fail to distinguish between regeneration and conversion. They regard it as a process in which man's attitude to life changes from the autocentric to the heterocentric. It finds its explanation primarily in the sub-conscious life, and does not necessarily involve anything supernatural. James says: "To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities." [*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.] According to Clark, "Students have agreed in discerning three distinct steps in conversion: (1) A period of 'storm and stress,' or sense of sin, or feeling of inward disharmony, known to theology as 'conviction of sin' and designated by James as 'soul sickness.' (2) An emotional crisis which marks a turning point. (3) A succeeding relaxation attended by a sense of peace, rest, inner harmony, acceptance with God, and not infrequently motor and sensory reflexes of various sorts." [*The Psychology of Religious Awakening*, p. 38.]

C. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF REGENERATION.

Relative to the nature of regeneration there are several misconceptions which should be avoided. It may be well to mention these first, before stating the positive qualifications of this re-creative work of God.

1. MISCONCEPTIONS. (a) Regeneration is not a change in the *substance* of human nature, as was taught by the Manichæans and in the days of the Reformation by Flacius Illyricus, who conceived of original sin as a substance, to be replaced by another substance in regeneration. No new physical seed or germ is

implanted in man; neither is there any addition to, or subtraction from, the faculties of the soul. (b) Neither is it simply a change in *one or more of the faculties of the* soul, as, for instance, of the emotional life (feeling or heart), by removing the aversion to divine things, as some evangelicals conceive of it; or of the intellect, by illuminating the mind that is darkened by sin, as the Rationalists regard it. It affects the heart, understood in the Scriptural sense of the word, that is, as the central and all-controlling organ of the soul, out of which are the issues of life. This means that it affects human nature as a whole. (c) Nor is it a complete or perfect change of the whole nature of man, or of any part of it, so that it is no more capable of sin, as was taught by the extreme Anabaptists and by some other fanatical sects. This does not mean that it does not in principle affect the entire nature of man, but only that it does not constitute the whole change that is wrought in man by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It does not comprise conversion and sanctification.

2. POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF REGENERATION. The following positive assertions may be made respecting regeneration:

a. Regeneration consists in the implanting of the *principle* of the new spiritual life in man, in a radical change of the governing disposition of the soul, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gives birth to a life that moves in a Godward direction. In principle this change affects the whole man: the intellect, I Cor. 2:14,15; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; Col. 3:10; the will, Ps. 110:3; Phil. 2:13; II Thess. 3:5; Heb. 13:21; and the feelings or emotions, Ps. 42:1,2; Matt. 5:4; I Pet. 1:8.

b. It is an *instantaneous* change of man's nature, affecting at once the whole man, intellectually, emotionally, and morally. The assertion that regeneration is an instantaneous change implies two things: (1) that it is not a work that is gradually prepared in the soul, as the Roman Catholics and all Semi-Pelagians teach; there is no intermediate stage between life and death; one either lives or is

dead; and (2) that it is not a gradual process like sanctification. It is true that some Reformed authors have occasionally used the term “regeneration” as including even sanctification, but that was in the days when the *ordo salutis* was not as fully developed as it is to-day.

c. It is in its most limited sense a change that occurs in the *sub-conscious* life. It is a secret and inscrutable work of God that is never *directly* perceived by man. The change may take place without man’s being conscious of it momentarily, though this is not the case when regeneration and conversion coincide; and even later on he can perceive it *only in its effects*. This explains the fact that a Christian may, on the one hand, struggle for a long time with doubts and uncertainties, and can yet, on the other hand, gradually overcome these and rise to the heights of assurance.

3. DEFINITION OF REGENERATION. From what was said in the preceding respecting the present use of the word “regeneration,” it follows that regeneration may be defined in two ways. In the strictest sense of the word we may say: *Regeneration is that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy.* But in order to include the idea of the new birth as well as that of the “begetting again,” it will be necessary to complement the definition with the following words: . . . “*and the first holy exercise of this new disposition is secured.*”

D. EFFECTUAL CALLING IN RELATION TO EXTERNAL CALLING AND REGENERATION.

1. ITS INSEPARABLE CONNECTION WITH EXTERNAL CALLING. The calling of God may be said to be one, and the distinction between an external and an internal or effectual calling merely calls attention to the fact that this one calling has two

aspects. This does not mean that these two aspects are always united and always go together. We do not aver with the Lutherans that “the inner call is always concurrent with the hearing of the word.”[Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 197 f.] It does mean, however, that where the inner call comes to adults, it is mediated by the preaching of the Word. It is the same Word that is heard in the external call, and that is made effective in the heart in the internal calling. Through the powerful application of the Holy Spirit the external call passes right into the internal.[Bavinck, *Roeping en Wedergeboorte*, p. 215.] But while this calling is closely connected with the external call and forms a unit with it, there are certain points of difference: (a) It is a calling by the Word, *savingly applied by the operation of the Holy Spirit*, I Cor. 1:23,24; I Pet. 2:9; (b) it is *a powerful* calling, that is, a calling that is effectual unto salvation, Acts 13:48; I Cor. 1:23,24; and (c) it is *without repentance*, that is, it is a call that is not subject to change and that is never withdrawn, Rom. 11:29.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTERNAL CALL. The following characteristics should be noted:

a. *It works by moral suasion plus the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit.* The question arises, whether in this calling (as distinguished from regeneration) the Word of God works in a creative way, or by moral suasion. Now there is no doubt about it that the Word of God is sometimes said to work in a creative manner, Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6,9; 147:15; Rom. 4:17 (though this may be interpreted differently). But these passages refer to the word of God’s power, to His authoritative command, and not to the word of preaching with which we are concerned here. The Spirit of God operates through the preaching of the Word only in a morally persuasive way, making its persuasions effective, so that man listens to the voice of his God. This follows from the very nature of the Word, which addresses itself to the understanding and the will. [Bavinck, *Roeping en Wedergeboorte*, pp. 217,219,221.] It should be borne in mind, however, that this moral suasion does not yet

constitute the whole of the internal call; there must be in addition to this a powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, applying the Word to the heart.

b. *It operates in the conscious life of man.* This point is most intimately connected with the preceding. If the word of preaching does not operate creatively, but only in a moral and persuasive way, it follows that it can work only in the conscious life of man. It addresses the understanding, which the Spirit endows with spiritual insight into the truth, and through the understanding influences the will effectively, so that the sinner turns to God. The internal calling necessarily issues in conversion, that is, in a conscious turning away from sin in the direction of holiness.

c. *It is teleological.* Internal calling is of a teleological character, that is, it calls man to a certain end: to the great goal to which the Holy Spirit is leading the elect, and, consequently also to the intermediate stages on the way to this final destiny. It is a calling to the fellowship of Jesus Christ, I Cor. 1:9; to inherit blessing, I Pet. 3:9; to liberty, Gal. 5:13; to peace, I Cor. 7:15; to holiness, I Thess. 4:7; to one hope, Eph. 4:4; to eternal life, I Tim. 6:12; and to God's kingdom and glory, I Thess. 2:12.

3. THE RELATION OF EFFECTUAL CALLING TO REGENERATION.

a. *The identification of the two in seventeenth century theology.* It is a well known fact that in seventeenth century theology effectual calling and regeneration are often identified, or if not entirely identified, then at least in so far that regeneration is regarded as included in calling. Several of the older theologians have a separate chapter on calling, but none on regeneration. According to the Westminster Confession, X. 2, effectual calling includes regeneration. This view finds some justification in the fact that Paul, who uses the term "regeneration" but once, evidently conceives of it as included in calling in Rom. 8:30. Moreover, there

is a sense in which calling and regeneration are related as cause and effect. It should be borne in mind, however, that in speaking of calling as including, or as being causally related to, regeneration, we do not have in mind merely what is technically termed internal or effectual calling, but calling in general, including even a creative calling. The extensive use in Post-Reformation times of the term “calling” rather than “regeneration,” to designate the beginning of the work of grace in the life of sinners, was due to a desire to stress the close connection between the Word of God and the operation of His grace. And the prevalence of the term “calling” in the apostolic age finds its explanation and justification in the fact that, in the case of those who were in that missionary period gathered into the Church, regeneration and effectual calling were generally simultaneous, while the change was reflected in their conscious life as a powerful calling from God. In a systematic presentation of the truth, however, we should carefully discriminate between calling and regeneration.

b. *Points of difference between regeneration and effectual calling.* Regeneration in the strictest sense of the word, that is, as *the begetting again*, takes place in the sub-conscious life of man, and is quite independent of any attitude which he may assume with reference to it. Calling, on the other hand, addresses itself to the consciousness, and implies a certain disposition of the conscious life. This follows from the fact that regeneration works from within, while calling comes from without. In the case of children we speak of regeneration rather than calling. Furthermore, regeneration is a creative, a hyper-physical operation of the Holy Spirit, by which man is brought from one condition into another, from a condition of spiritual death into a condition of spiritual life. Effectual calling, on the other hand, is teleological, draws out the new life and points it in a God-ward direction. It secures the exercises of the new disposition and brings the new life into action.

c. *The relative order of calling and regeneration.* This is perhaps best understood, if we note the following stages: (1) Logically, the

external call in the preaching of the Word (except in the case of children) generally precedes or coincides with the operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the new life is produced in the soul of man. (2) Then by a creative word God generates the new life, changing the inner disposition of the soul, illuminating the mind, rousing the feelings, and renewing the will. In this act of God the ear is implanted that enables man to hear the call of God to the salvation of his soul. *This is regeneration in the most restricted sense of the word.* In it man is entirely passive. (3) Having received the spiritual ear, the call of God in the gospel is now heard by the sinner, and is brought home effectively to the heart. The desire to resist has been changed to a desire to obey, and the sinner yields to the persuasive influence of the Word through the operation of the Holy Spirit. *This is the effectual calling through the instrumentality of the word of preaching, effectively applied by the Spirit of God.* (4) This effectual calling, finally, secures, through the truth as a means, the first holy exercises of the new disposition that is born in the soul. The new life begins to manifest itself; the implanted life issues in the new birth. *This is the completion of the work of regeneration in the broader sense of the word, and the point at which it turns into conversion.*

Now we should not make the mistake of regarding this logical order as a temporal order that will apply in all cases. The new life is often implanted in the hearts of children long before they are able to hear the call of the gospel; yet they are endowed with this life only where the gospel is preached. There is, of course, always a creative call of God by which the new life is produced. In the case of those who live under the administration of the gospel the possibility exists that they receive the seed of regeneration long before they come to years of discretion and therefore also long before the effectual calling penetrates to their consciousness. It is very unlikely, however, that, being regenerated, they will live in sin for years, even after they have come to maturity, and give no evidences at all of the new life that is in them. On the other hand, in the case of those who do not live under the administration of the covenant, there is no reason to

assume an interval between the time of their regeneration and that of their effectual calling. In the effectual call they at once become conscious of their renewal, and immediately find the seed of regeneration germinating into the new life. This means that regeneration, effective calling, and conversion all coincide.

E. THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

1. THIS NECESSITY IS DENIED BY MODERN LIBERAL THEOLOGY. The necessity of regeneration, as this is understood by the Christian Church, is naturally denied in modern liberal theology. It is not in accord with the teaching of Rousseau, that man is by nature good. Any *radical change* or complete turnabout in the life of a man who is *essentially* good, would be a change for the worse. Liberals speak of salvation by character, and the only regeneration of which they know is a regeneration conceived as “a vital step in the natural development of the spiritual life, a radical readjustment to the moral processes of life.” (Youtz.) Many teach a series of ethical renewals. Emerton says: “The character thus gained and proven and held fast is redemption. There is no other worthy definition of the word. It is the redemption of man’s lower self by the domination of his higher self. It is the spiritual redeeming the material, the divine that is in every man redeeming the animal.”[*Unitarian Thought*, p. 193.]

2. IT FOLLOWS FROM WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES CONCERNING THE NATURAL CONDITION OF MAN. Holiness or conformity to the divine law is the indispensable condition of securing divine favor, attaining peace of conscience, and enjoying fellowship with God. Heb. 12:14. Now the condition of man by nature is, according to Scripture, both in disposition and act, exactly the opposite of that holiness which is so indispensable. Man is described as dead through trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1, and this condition calls for nothing less than a restoration to life. A radical

internal change is necessary, a change by which the whole disposition of the soul is altered.

3. IT IS ALSO EXPRESSLY ASSERTED BY SCRIPTURE.

Scripture does not leave us in doubt about the necessity of regeneration, but asserts this in the clearest terms. Jesus says: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,” John 3:3.[Cf. also the verses 5-7.] This statement of the Saviour is absolute and leaves no room for exceptions. The same truth is clearly brought out in some of the statements of Paul, as, for instance, in I Cor. 2:14: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”; Gal. 6:15: “For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Cf. also Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:11; Eph. 2:3,4.

F. THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REGENERATION.

There are only three fundamentally different views that come into consideration here, and all the others are modifications of these.

1. THE HUMAN WILL. According to the Pelagian conception regeneration is solely an act of the human will, and is practically identical with self-reformation. With some slight differences this is the view of modern liberal theology. A modification of this view is that of the Semi-Pelagian and Arminian, who regard it as, at least in part, an act of man, co-operating with divine influences applied through the truth. This is the synergistic theory of regeneration. Both of these views involve a denial of the total depravity of man, so plainly taught in the Word of God, John 5:42; Rom. 3:9-18; 7:18,23; 8:7; II Tim. 3:4, and of the Scripture truth that it is God who inclines the will, Rom. 9:16; Phil. 2:13.

2. THE TRUTH. According to this view the truth as a system of motives, presented to the human will by the Holy Spirit, is the immediate cause of the change from unholiness to holiness. This was the view of Lyman Beecher and of Charles G. Finney. It assumes that the work of the Holy Spirit differs from that of the preacher only in degree. Both work by persuasion only. But this theory is quite unsatisfactory. The truth can be a motive to holiness only if it is loved, while the natural man does not love the truth, but hates it, Rom. 1:18,25. Consequently the truth, presented externally, cannot be the efficient cause of regeneration.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT. The only adequate view is that of the Church of all ages, that the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of regeneration. This means that the Holy Spirit works directly on the heart of man and changes its spiritual condition. There is no co-operation of the sinner in this work whatsoever. It is the work of the Holy Spirit directly and exclusively, Ezek. 11:19; John 1:13; Acts 16:14; Rom. 9:16; Phil. 2:13. Regeneration, then, is to be conceived monergistically. God alone works, and the sinner has no part in it whatsoever. This, of course, does not mean, that man does not co-operate in later stages of the work of redemption. It is quite evident from Scripture that he does.

G. THE USE OF THE WORD OF GOD AS AN INSTRUMENT IN REGENERATION.

The question arises, whether the Word of God is used as a means in regeneration or not; or, as it is frequently put, whether regeneration is mediate or immediate.

1. THE PROPER IMPORT OF THE QUESTION. Careful discrimination is required, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

a. When the older Reformed theologians insisted on the *immediate* character of regeneration, they often gave the term

“immediate” a connotation which it does not have to-day. Some of the representatives of the school of Saumur, as Cameron and Pajon, taught that in regeneration the Holy Spirit supernaturally illumines and convinces the mind or the intellect in such a powerful manner that the will cannot fail to follow the prevalent dictate of the practical judgment. He works immediately only on the intellect, and through this mediately on the will. *According to them there is no immediate operation of the Holy Spirit on the will of man.* In opposition to these men, Reformed theologians generally stressed the fact that in regeneration the Holy Spirit also *operates directly on the will of man*, and not merely through the mediation of the intellect. To-day the question of mediate or immediate regeneration is a slightly different, though related, one. It is the question of the use of the Word of God as a means in the work of regeneration.

b. The exact form of the question ought to be carefully noted. The question is not, whether God works regeneration by means of a *creative* word. It is generally admitted that He does. Neither is it, whether He employs the word of truth, the word of preaching in the *new birth*, as distinguished from *the divine begetting* of the new man, that is, in securing the first holy exercises of the new life. The real question is, whether God, in implanting or generating the new life, employs the word of Scripture or the word of preaching as an instrument or means. The discussion of this matter often suffered in the past from the lack of proper discrimination.

2. CONSIDERATIONS THAT FAVOR A NEGATIVE ANSWER. Dr. Shedd says: “The influence of the Holy Spirit is distinguishable from that of the truth; from that of man upon man; and from that of any instrument or means whatever. His energy acts directly upon the human soul itself. It is the influence of spirit upon spirit; of one of the trinitarian persons upon a human person. Neither the truth, nor a fellow-man, can thus operate directly upon the essence of the soul itself.”[*Dogm. Theol.* II, p. 500.] The following considerations favor this view:

a. Regeneration is a creative act, by which the spiritually dead sinner is restored to life. But the truth of the gospel can only work in a moral and persuasive way. Such an instrument has no effect on the dead. To assert its use would seem to imply a denial of the spiritual death of man; which, of course, is not intended by those who take this position.

b. Regeneration takes place in the sphere of the sub-conscious, that is, outside of the sphere of conscious attention, while the truth addresses itself to the consciousness of man. It can exercise its persuasive influence only when man's attention is fixed on it.

c. The Bible distinguishes the influence of the Holy Spirit from that of the Word of God, and declares that such an influence is necessary for the proper reception of the truth, John 6:64,65; Acts 16:14; I Cor. 2:12-15; Eph. 1:17-20. Notice particularly the case of Lydia, of whom Luke says: "She heard us (*ekouen*, impf.), whose heart the Lord opened (*dienoixen*, aor., single act), that she attended (*prosechein*, inf. of result or purpose) unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

3. SCRIPTURE PASSAGES THAT SEEM TO PROVE THE CONTRARY.

a. In James 1:18 we read: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." This passage does not prove that the new generation is mediated by the Word of God, for the term here used is *apokuesen*, which does not refer to begetting, but to giving birth. They who believe in immediate regeneration do not deny that the new birth, in which the new life first becomes manifest, is secured by the Word.

b. Peter exhorts believers to love one another fervently in view of the fact that they have been "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth." I Pet. 1:23. It is not correct to say, as some have done, that

“the Word” in this verse is the creative word, or the second person in the Trinity, for Peter himself informs us that he has in mind the word that was preached unto the readers, vs. 25. But it is perfectly in order to point out that even *gennaō* (the word here used) does not always refer to the masculine begetting, but may also denote the feminine giving birth to children. This is perfectly evident from such passages as Luke 1:13,57; 23:29; John 16:21; Gal. 4:24. Consequently, there is no warrant for the assertion that Peter in this passage refers to the initial act in regeneration, namely, the begetting. And if it refers to regeneration in a broader sense, then the passage offers no difficulty whatsoever in connection with the matter under consideration. The idea that it refers to the new birth here, is favored by the fact that the readers are represented as having been born again out of a seed that was evidently already implanted in the soul, cf. John 1:13. It is not necessary to identify the seed with the Word.

c. The Parable of the Sower is sometimes urged in favor of the idea that regeneration takes place through the Word. The seed in this parable is the word of the kingdom. The argument is that the life is in the seed and comes forth out of the seed. Consequently, the new life comes forth out of the seed of the Word of God. But, in the first place, this is over-shooting the mark, for it will hardly do to say that the Spirit or the principle of the new life is shut up in the Word, just as the living germ is shut up in the seed. This reminds one somewhat of the Lutheran conception of calling, according to which the Spirit is in the Word so that the call would always be effective, if man did not put a stumbling-block in the way. And, in the second place, this is pressing a point which is not at all in the *tertium comparationis*. The Saviour wants to explain in this parable how it comes about that the seed of the Word bears fruit in some cases, and not in others. It bears fruit only in those cases in which it falls in good ground, in hearts so prepared that they understand the truth.

4. THE RELEVANT TEACHINGS OF OUR CONFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

The following passages come into consideration here: *Conf. Belg.*, Articles XXIV and XXXV; *Heid. Cat.*, Q. 54; *Canons of Dort*, III and IV, Articles 11,12,17; and, finally, the *Conclusions of Utrecht*, adopted by our Church in 1908. From these passages it is perfectly evident that our confessional writings speak of regeneration in a broad sense, as including both the origin of the new life and its manifestation in conversion. We are even told that faith regenerates the sinner.[*Conf. Belg.*, Art. XXIV.] There are passages which seem to say that the Word of God is instrumental in the work of regeneration.[*Conf. Belg.*, Art XXIV, and especially Art. XXVI; *Canons of Dort* III and IV, Articles 12,17.] Yet they are couched in such language that it still remains doubtful, whether they actually teach that the principle of the new life is implanted in the soul by the instrumentality of the Word. They fail to discriminate carefully between the various elements which we distinguish in regeneration. In the *Conclusions of Utrecht* we read: “As far as the third point, that of *immediate regeneration*, is concerned, Synod declares that this expression can be used in a good sense, in so far as our churches have always confessed, over against the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic Church, that regeneration is not effected through the Word or the Sacraments as such, but by the almighty regenerating work of the Holy Spirit; that this regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, however, may not in that sense be divorced from the preaching of the Word, as if both were separated from each other; for, although our Confession teaches that we need not be in doubt respecting the salvation of our children which die in infancy, though they have not heard the preaching of the gospel, and our confessional standards nowhere express themselves as to the manner in which regeneration is effected in the case of these and other children, — yet it is, on the other hand, certain that the gospel is a power of God unto salvation for every one who believes, and that in the case of adults the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the gospel.”[The following Reformed theologians teach immediate regeneration; *Synopsis Purioris Theologie* (of the Leyden

Professors), 31:9; Mastricht, *Godgeleerdheit* VI. 3,26; Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* I, p. 738. These three authorities, however, apparently use the term “immediate” in a different sense. Further: Turretin, *Opera* XV. 4,23 f.; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* II, pp. 500, 506; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* III, p. 31; Kuyper, *Dict Dogm., De Salute*, p. 74; Bavinck, *Roeping en Wedergeboorte*, pp. 219 ff.; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 46 ff.]

H. DIVERGENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION.

1. THE PELAGIAN VIEW. According to the Pelagians man’s freedom and personal responsibility implies that he is at all times just as able to desist from sin as to commit sin. Only acts of conscious volition are regarded as sin. Consequently, regeneration simply consists in moral reformation. It means that the man who formerly chose to transgress the law, now chooses to live in obedience to it.

2. BAPTISMAL REGENERATION. This is not always represented in the same way.

a. *In the Church of Rome.* According to the Roman Catholic Church regeneration includes not only spiritual renewal, but also justification or the forgiveness of sins, and is effected by means of baptism. In the case of children the work of regeneration is always effective; not so in the case of adults. These can gratefully accept and utilize the grace of regeneration, but can also resist it and make it ineffective. Moreover, it is always possible that they who have appropriated it will lose it again.

b. *In the Anglican Church.* The Church of England is not unanimous on this point, but represents two different tendencies. The so-called Puseyites are in essential agreement with the Church of Rome. But there is also an influential party in the Church which distinguishes

two kinds of regeneration: the one consisting merely in a change of one's relation to the Church and the means of grace; and the other, in a fundamental change of human nature. According to this party only the former is effected by baptism. This regeneration includes no spiritual renewal. By means of it man merely enters into a new relation to the Church, and becomes a child of God in the same sense in which the Jews became children of God through the covenant of which circumcision was a seal.

c. In the Lutheran Church. Luther and his followers did not succeed in purging their Church from the leaven of Rome on this point. On the whole the Lutherans maintain, in opposition to Rome, the monergistic character of regeneration. They regard man as entirely passive in regeneration and incapable of contributing anything to it, though adults can resist it for a long time. At the same time some teach that baptism, working *ex opere operato*, is the usual means by which God effects regeneration. It is the *usual*, but *not the only* means, for the preaching of the Word may also produce it. They speak of two kinds of regeneration, namely, *regeneratio prima*, by which the new life is begotten, and the *regeneratio secunda* or *renovatio*, by which the new life is led in a God-ward direction. While children receive the *regeneratio prima* by means of baptism, adults, who receive the first regeneration by means of the Word, become partakers of the *regeneratio secunda* through baptism. According to the Lutherans regeneration is amissible. But through the grace of God it can be restored in the heart of the penitent sinner, and that without re-baptism. Baptism is a pledge of God's continued readiness to renew the baptized and to pardon his sins. Moreover, regeneration is not always accomplished at once, but is often a gradual process in the life of adults.

3. THE ARMINIAN VIEW. According to the Arminians regeneration is not exclusively a work of God, nor exclusively a work of man. It is the fruit of man's choice to co-operate with the divine influences exerted by means of the truth. Strictly speaking, the work of man is prior to that of God. They do not assume that

there is a preceding work of God by which the will is inclined to the good. Naturally, they also believe that the grace of regeneration can be lost. The Wesleyan Arminians altered this view in so far that they stress the fact that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, be it in co-operation with the human will. They do assume a prior operation of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, awaken, and draw man. However, they also believe that man can resist this work of the Holy Spirit, and that, as long as he does this, he remains in his unregenerate condition.

4. THE VIEW OF THE MEDIATING THEOLOGIANS. This is cast in a pantheistic mold. After the incarnation there are no two separate natures in Christ, but only a divine-human nature, a fusion of divine and human life. In regeneration a part of that divine-human life passes over into the sinner. This does not require a separate operation of the Holy Spirit whenever a sinner is regenerated. The new life has been communicated to the Church once for all, is now the permanent possession of the Church, and passes from the Church into the individual. Communion with the Church also insures participation of the new life. This view ignores the legal aspect of the work of Christ entirely. Moreover, it makes it impossible to hold that any one could be regenerated before the divine-human life of Christ came into existence. The Old Testament saints cannot have been regenerated. Schleiermacher is the father of this view.

5. THE TRICHOTOMIC VIEW. Some theologians constructed a peculiar theory of regeneration on the basis of the trichotomic view of human nature. This view proceeds on the assumption that man consists of three parts, — body, soul, and spirit. It is generally assumed, though there are variations on this point, that sin has its seat only in the soul, and not in the spirit (*pneuma*). If it had penetrated to the spirit, man would have been irretrievably lost, just as the devils, who are pure spiritual beings. The spirit is the higher, divine life in man, destined to control the lower life. By the entrance of sin into the world the influence of the spirit on the lower life is

weakened very much; but by regeneration it is strengthened again and harmony is restored in the life of man. This is, of course, a purely rationalistic theory.[Cf. *Heard, The Tripartite Nature of Man.*]

6. THE VIEW OF MODERN LIBERALISM. The liberal theologians of the present day do not all have the same view of regeneration. Some of them speak in terms that remind one of Schleiermacher. More generally, however, they sponsor a purely naturalistic view. They are averse to the idea that regeneration is a supernatural and recreative work of God. In virtue of the immanent God every man has a divine principle within him and thus possesses potentially all that is necessary unto salvation. The one thing that is necessary, is that man become conscious of his potential divinity, and that he consciously yield to the guidance of the higher principle within him. Regeneration is simply an ethical change of character.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What other terms and expressions does the Bible use to designate the work of regeneration? Does the Bible sharply distinguish between calling, regeneration, conversion, and sanctification? How do you account for it that the Roman Catholic Church includes even justification in regeneration? How do regeneration and conversion differ? Is there such a thing as prevenient grace, preceding and preparing for regeneration? What is active, as distinguished from passive, regeneration? Does man's passivity in regeneration last for any length of time? Does not the view that the Word of God is not instrumental in effecting regeneration, make the preaching of the Word seem futile and quite unnecessary? Does it not lead to the verge of mysticism?

LITERATURE: Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 70-83; *ibid., Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest*, II, pp. 140-162; Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm*, IV, pp. 11-82; *ibid., Roeping en Wedergeboorte*; Maastricht, *Godgeleerdheid*, VI, 3; Dick, *Theology*, Lect. LXVI; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* II, pp. 490-528; Dabney, *Syst. and*

Polem. Theol., Lect. XLVII; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 32-65; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* III, pp. 1-40; McPherson, *Chr. Dogma*, pp. 397-401; Alexander, *Syst. of Bib. Theol.* II, pp. 370-384; Litton, *Introd. to Dogm. Theol.*, pp. 313-321; Schmid, *Doct. Theol. of the Ev. Luth. Church*, pp. 463-470; Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 242-271; Raymond, *Syst. Theol.* II, pp. 344-359; Pope, *Chr. Theol.* III, pp. 5-13; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 809-828; Boyce, *Abstract of Syst. Theol.*, pp. 328-334; Wilmers, *Handbook of the Chr. Rel.*, pp. 314-322; Anderson, *Regeneration*.

VII. Conversion

From the discussion of regeneration and effectual calling there is a natural transition to that of conversion. By a special operation of the Holy Spirit the former issues in the latter. Conversion may be a sharply marked crisis in the life of the individual, but may also come in the form of a gradual process. In the psychology of religion the two are generally identified. All this points to the close relation between the two.

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR CONVERSION.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT WORDS. The Old Testament employs especially two words for conversion, namely:

a. *Nacham*, which serves to express a deep feeling, either of sorrow (niph'al) or of relief (piel). In *niph'al* it means *to repent*, and this repentance is often accompanied with a change of plan and of action, while in *piel* it signifies *to comfort* or *to comfort one's self*. As a designation of repentance—and this is the meaning with which we are concerned here—it is used not only of man but also of God, Gen. 6:6,7; Ex. 32:14; Judg. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11.

b. *Shubh*, which is the most common word for conversion, means *to turn*, *to turn about*, and *to return*. It is often used in a literal sense of both God and man, but soon acquired a religious and ethical signification. This meaning is most prominent in the prophets, where it refers to Israel's return to the Lord, after it has departed from Him. The word clearly shows that, what the Old Testament calls conversion, is a return to Him from whom sin has separated man. This is a very important element in conversion. It finds

expression in the words of the prodigal son, “I will return, and go to my father.”

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT WORDS. There are especially three words that come into consideration here:

a. *Metanoia* (verbal form, *metanoeo*). This is the most common word for conversion in the New Testament, and is also the most fundamental of the terms employed. The word is composed of *meta* and *nous*, which is again connected with the verb *ginosko* (Lat. *noscere*; Eng., *to know*), all of which refers to the conscious life of man. In the English Bible the word is translated “*repentance*,” but this rendering hardly does justice to the original, since it gives undue prominence to the emotional element. Trench points out that in the classics the word means: (1) *to know after, after-knowledge*; (2) *to change the mind as the result of this after-knowledge*; (3) *in consequence of this change of mind, to regret the course pursued*; and (4) *a change of conduct for the future*, springing from all the preceding. It might indicate a change for the worse as well as for the better, however, and did not necessarily include a *resipiscentia* — a becoming wise again. In the New Testament, however, its meaning is deepened, and it denotes primarily a change of mind, taking a *wiser* view of the past, including regret for the ill then done, and leading to a change of life for the better. Here the element of *resipiscentia* is present. Walden in his work on *The Great Meaning of Metanoia* comes to the conclusion that it conveys the idea of “a *general* change of mind, which becomes in its fullest development an *intellectual and moral regeneration*.”[p. 107.] While maintaining that the word denotes primarily a change of mind, we should not lose sight of the fact that its meaning is not limited to the intellectual, theoretical consciousness, but also includes the moral consciousness, the conscience. Both the mind and the conscience are defiled, Tit. 1:15, and when a person’s *nous* is changed, he not only receives new knowledge, but the direction of his conscious life, its moral quality, is also changed. To become more particular, the change indicated by

his word has reference, (1) *to the intellectual life*, II Tim. 2:25, to a better knowledge of God and His truth, and a saving acceptance of it (identical with the action of faith); (2) *to the conscious volitional life*, Acts 8:22, to a turning from self to God (thus again including an action of faith); and (3) *to the emotional life*, in so far as this change is accompanied with godly sorrow, II Cor. 7:10, and opens new fields of enjoyment for the sinner. In all these respects *metanoia* includes a conscious opposition to the former condition. This is an essential element in it, and therefore deserves careful attention. To be converted, is not merely to pass from one conscious direction to another, but to do it with a clearly perceived aversion to the former direction. In other words *metanoia* has not only a positive but also a negative side; it looks backward as well as forward. The converted person becomes conscious of his ignorance and error, his wilfulness and folly. His conversion includes both faith and repentance. Sad to say, the Church gradually lost sight of the original meaning of *metanoia*. In Latin theology Lactantius rendered it “*resipiscentia*,” a becoming-wise-again, as if the word were derived from *meta* and *anoia*, and denoted a return from madness or folly. The majority of Latin writers, however, preferred to render it “*poenitentia*,” a word that denotes the sorrow and regret which follows when one has made a mistake or has committed an error of any kind. This word passed into the Vulgate as the rendering of *metanoia*, and, under the influence of the Vulgate, the English translators rendered the Greek word by “repentance,” thus stressing the emotional element and making *metanoia* equivalent to *metameleia*. In some cases the deterioration went even farther. The Roman Catholic Church externalized the idea of repentance in its sacrament of penance so that the *metanoieite* of the Greek Testament (Matt. 3:2) became *poenitentiam agite*, — “do penance,” in the Latin Version.

b. *Epistrophe* (verbal form, *epistrepho*). This word is next in importance to *metanoia*. While in the Septuagint *metanoia* is one of the renderings of *nacham*, the words *epistrophe* and *epistrepho* serve to render the Hebrew

words *teshubhah* and *shubh*. They are constantly used in the sense of *turning again*, or *turning back*. The Greek words must be read in the light of the Hebrew, in order to bring out the important point that the turning indicated is in reality a *re-turning*. In the New Testament the noun *epistrophe* is used but once, Acts 15:3, while the verb occurs several times. It has a somewhat wider signification than *metanoeo*, and really indicates the final act of conversion. It denotes not merely a change of the *nous* or mind, but stresses the fact that a new relation is established, that the active life is made to move in another direction. This must be borne in mind in the interpretation of Acts 3:19, where the two are used alongside of each other. Sometimes *metanoeo* contains the idea of repentance only, while *epistrophe* always includes the element of faith. *Metanoeo* and *pisteuein* can be used alongside of each other; not so *epistrophe* and *pisteuein*.

c. *Metameleia* (verbal form, *metamelomai*). Only the verbal form is used in the New Testament, and literally means *to become a care to one afterwards*. It is one of the renderings of the Hebrew *nicham* in the Septuagint. In the New Testament it is found only five times, namely, in Matt. 21:29,32; 27:3; II Cor. 7:10; Heb. 7:21. It is evident from these passages that the word stresses the element of repentance, though this is not necessarily *true* repentance. In it the negative, retrospective and emotional element is uppermost, while *metanoeo* also includes a volitional element and denotes an energetic turn-about of the will. While *metanoeo* is sometimes used in the imperative, this is never the case with *metamelomai*. The feelings do not permit themselves to be commanded. This word corresponds more nearly to the Latin *poenitentia* than does *metanoeo*.

B. THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF CONVERSION. DEFINITION.

The doctrine of conversion is, of course, like all other doctrines, based on Scripture and should be accepted on that ground. Since conversion is a conscious experience in the lives of many, the testimony of experience can be added to that of the Word of God, but this testimony, however valuable it may be, does not add to the certainty of the doctrine taught in the Word of God. We may be grateful that in recent years the Psychology of Religion paid considerable attention to the fact of conversion, but should always bear in mind that, while it has brought some interesting facts to our attention, it did little or nothing to *explain* conversion as a *religious phenomenon*. The Scriptural doctrine of conversion is based not merely on the passages containing one or more of the terms mentioned in the preceding, but also on many others in which the phenomenon of conversion is described or represented concretely in living examples. The Bible does not always speak of conversion in the same sense. We may distinguish the following:

1. NATIONAL CONVERSIONS. In the days of Moses, Joshua, and the Judges, the people of Israel repeatedly turned their backs upon Jehovah, and after experiencing the displeasure of God, repented of their sin and returned unto the Lord; there was a national conversion in the kingdom of Judah in the days of Hezekiah and again in the days of Josiah. Upon the preaching of Jonah the Ninevites repented of their sins and were spared by the Lord, Jonah 3:10. These national conversions were merely of the nature of moral reformations. They may have been accompanied with some real religious conversions of individuals, but fell far short of the true conversion of all those that belonged to the nation. As a rule they were very superficial. They made their appearance under the leadership of pious rulers, and when these were succeeded by wicked men, the people at once fell back into their old habits.

2. TEMPORARY CONVERSIONS. The Bible also refers to conversions of individuals that represent no change of the heart, and are therefore of only passing significance. In the parable of the sower Jesus speaks of such as hear the word and at once receive it

with joy, but have no root in themselves, and therefore endure but for a while. When tribulations and trials and persecutions come, they are speedily offended and fall away. Matt. 13:20,21. Paul makes mention of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who “made shipwreck concerning the faith,” I Tim. 1:19,20. Cf. also II Tim. 2:17,18. And in II Tim. 4:10 he refers to Demas who left him, because the love of the present world gained the upper hand. And the writer of Hebrews speaks of some as falling away “who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come,” Heb. 6.4-6. Finally, John says of some who had turned their backs upon the faithful: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,” I John 2:19. Such temporary conversions may for a time have the appearance of true conversions.

3. TRUE CONVERSION (CONVERSIS ACTUALIS PRIMA).

True conversion is born of godly sorrow, and issues in a life of devotion to God, II Cor. 7:10. It is a change that is rooted in the work of regeneration, and that is effected in the conscious life of the sinner by the Spirit of God; a change of thoughts and opinions, of desires and volitions, which involves the conviction that the former direction of life was unwise and wrong and alters the entire course of life. There are two sides to this conversion, the one active and the other passive; the former being the act of God, by which He changes the conscious course of man’s life, and the latter, the result of this action as seen in man’s changing his course of life and turning to God. Consequently, a twofold definition must be given of conversion: (a) Active conversion is *that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated sinner, in His conscious life, to turn to Him in repentance and faith.* (b) Passive conversion is *the resulting conscious act of the regenerated sinner whereby he, through the grace of God, turns to God in repentance and faith.* This true conversion is the conversion with which we are primarily concerned in theology. The Word of God contains several striking examples of it, as, for instance, the conversions of Naaman, II Kings 5:15;

Manasseh, II Chron. 33:12,13; Zaccheus, Luke 19:8,9; the man born blind, John 9:38; the Samaritan woman, John 4:29,39; the eunuch, Acts 8:30 ff.; Cornelius, Acts 10:44 ff.; Paul, Acts 9:5 ff.; Lydia, Acts 16:14. and others.

4. REPEATED CONVERSION. The Bible also speaks of a repeated conversion, in which a converted person, after a temporary lapse into the ways of sin, turns back to God. Strong prefers not to use the word “conversion” for this change, but to employ such words and phrases as “breaking off, forsaking, returning from, neglects or transgressions,” and “coming back to Christ, trusting Him anew.” But Scripture itself uses the word “conversion” for such cases, Luke 22:32; Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19. It should be understood, however, that conversion in the strictly soteriological sense of the word is never repeated. They who have experienced a true conversion may temporarily fall under the spell of evil and fall into sin; they may at times even wander far from home; but the new life is bound to re-assert itself and will eventually cause them to return to God with penitent hearts.

C. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVERSION.

Conversion is simply one part of the saving process. But because it is a part of an organic process, it is naturally closely connected with every other part. Sometimes a tendency becomes apparent, especially in our country, to identify it with some of the other parts of the process or to glorify it as if it were by far the most important part of the process. It is a well known fact that some, in speaking of their redemption, never get beyond the story of their conversion and forget to tell about their spiritual growth in later years. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that in their experience conversion stands out as a sharply marked crisis, and a crisis which called for action on their part. In view of the present day tendency to lose sight of the lines of demarcation in the saving process, it is well to

remind ourselves of the truth of the old Latin adage, “*Qui bene distinguet, bene docet.*” We should note the following characteristics of conversion:

1. Conversion belongs to the re-creative rather than to the judicial acts of God. It does not alter the state but the condition of man. At the same time it is closely connected with the divine operations in the judicial sphere. In conversion man becomes conscious of the fact that he is worthy of condemnation and is also brought to a recognition of that fact. While this already presupposes faith, it also leads to a greater manifestation of faith in Jesus Christ, a confident trusting in Him for salvation. And this faith, in turn, by appropriating the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is instrumental in the sinner’s justification. In conversion man awakens to the joyous assurance that all his sins are pardoned on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ.

2. As the word *metanoia* clearly indicates, conversion takes place, not in the subconscious, but in the conscious life of the sinner. This does not mean that it is not rooted in the subconscious life. Being a direct effect of regeneration, it naturally includes a transition in the operations of the new life from the subconscious to the conscious life. In view of this it may be said that conversion begins below consciousness, but that, as a completed act, it certainly falls within the range of the conscious life. This brings out the close connection between regeneration and conversion. A conversion that is not rooted in regeneration is no true conversion.

3. Conversion marks the conscious beginning, not only of the putting away of the old man, a fleeing from sin, but also of the putting on of the new man, a striving for holiness of life. In regeneration the sinful principle of the old life is already replaced by the holy principle of the new life. But it is only in conversion that this transition penetrates into the conscious life, turning it into a new and Godward direction. The sinner consciously forsakes the old sinful life and turns to a life in communion with and devoted to

God. This does not mean, however, that the struggle between the old and the new is at once ended; it will continue as long as man lives.

4. If we take the word “conversion” in its most specific sense, it denotes a momentary change and not a process like sanctification. It is a change that takes place once and that cannot be repeated, though, as stated above, the Bible also speaks of the Christian’s return to God, after he has fallen into sin, as conversion. It is the believer’s turning to God and holiness again, after he has temporarily lost sight of these. In connection with regeneration we cannot possibly speak of repetition; but in the conscious life of the Christian there are ups and downs, seasons of close communion with God and seasons of estrangement from Him.

5. Over against those who think of conversion only as a definite crisis in life, it should be noted that, while conversion may be such a sharply marked crisis, it may also be a very gradual change. Older theology has always distinguished between sudden and gradual conversions (as in the cases of Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy); and in our day the psychology of conversion stresses the same distinction. Crisis conversions are most frequent in days of religious declension, and in the lives of those who have not enjoyed the privileges of a real religious education, and who have wandered far from the path of truth, of righteousness, and of holiness.

6. Finally, in our day, in which many psychologists show an inclination to reduce conversion to a general and natural phenomenon of the adolescent period of life, it becomes necessary to point out that, when we speak of conversion, we have in mind a *supernatural* work of God, resulting in a *religious change*. The psychologists sometimes intimate that conversion is but a natural phenomenon by calling attention to the fact that sudden changes also occur in the intellectual and moral life of man. Some of them hold that the emergence of the idea of sex plays an important part in

conversion. Over against this rationalistic and naturalistic tendency the specific character of religious conversion must be maintained.

D. THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS IN CONVERSION.

It already appears from the preceding that conversion comprises two elements, namely, repentance and faith. Of these the former is retrospective, and the latter prospective. Repentance is directly connected with sanctification, while faith is closely, though not exclusively, related to justification. In view of the fact that faith will be discussed in a separate chapter, we limit ourselves to repentance here, and define it as *that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner, by which he turns away from sin.*

1. THE ELEMENTS OF REPENTANCE. We distinguish three elements in repentance:

a. *An intellectual element.* There is a change of view, a recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness. It is designated in Scripture as *epignosis hamartias* (knowledge of sin), Rom. 3:20, cf. 1:32. If this is not accompanied by the following elements, it may manifest itself as fear of punishment, while there is as yet no hatred of sin.

b. *An emotional element.* There is a change of feeling, manifesting itself in sorrow for sin committed against a holy and just God, Ps. 51:2,10,14. This element of repentance is indicated by the word *metamelomai*. If it is accompanied by the following element, it is a *lupe kata theou* (godly sorrow), but if it is not so accompanied, it is a *lupe tou kosmou* (sorrow of the world), manifesting itself in remorse and despair, II Cor. 7:9,10; Matt. 27:3; Luke 18:23.

c. *A volitional element.* There is also a volitional element, consisting in a change of purpose, an inward turning away from sin, and a

disposition to seek pardon and cleansing, Ps. 51:5,7,10; Jer. 25:5. This includes the two other elements, and is therefore the most important aspect of repentance. It is indicated in Scripture by the word *metanoia*, Acts 2:38; Rom. 2:4.

2. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IN THE CHURCH OF ROME. The Church of Rome has externalized the idea of repentance entirely. The most important elements in its sacrament of penance are *contrition*, *confession*, *satisfaction*, and *absolution*. Of these four *contrition* is the only one that properly belongs to repentance, and even from this the Romanist excludes all sorrow for inborn sin, and retains only that for personal transgressions. And because only few experience real *contrition*, he is also satisfied with *attrition*. This is “the mental conviction that sin deserves punishment, but does not include trust in God and a purpose to turn away from sin. It is the fear of hell.”[Schaff, *Our Fathers’ Faith and Ours*, p. 358.] Confession in the Roman Catholic Church is confession to the priest, who absolves, not declaratively, but judicially. Moreover, satisfaction consists in the sinner’s doing penance, that is, enduring something painful, or performing some difficult or distasteful task. The central thought is that such outward performances really constitute a satisfaction for sin.

3. THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF REPENTANCE. Over against this external view of repentance the Scriptural idea should be maintained. According to Scripture repentance is wholly an inward act, and should not be confounded with the change of life that proceeds from it. Confession of sin and reparation of wrongs are *fruits* of repentance. Repentance is only a negative condition, and not a positive means of salvation. While it is the sinner’s present duty, it does not offset the claims of the law on account of past transgressions. Moreover, true repentance never exists except in conjunction with faith, while, on the other hand, wherever there is true faith, there is also real repentance. The two are but different aspects of the same turning, — a turning away from sin in the direction of God. Luther sometimes spoke of a repentance preceding

faith, but seems nevertheless to have agreed with Calvin in regarding true repentance as one of the fruits of faith. Lutherans are wont to stress the fact that repentance is wrought by the law and faith by the gospel. It should be borne in mind, however, that the two cannot be separated; they are simply complementary parts of the same process.

E. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONVERSION.

During recent years psychologists have made a special study of the phenomena of conversion.

1. THE NATURE OF THIS STUDY. The nature of this study can best be learned from such works as those of Coe, *The Spiritual Life*; Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*; James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*; Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*; Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*; Clark, *The Psychology of Religious Awakening*; Hughes, *The New Psychology and Religious Experience*; and Horton, *The Psychological Approach to Theology*. For a long time Psychology neglected the facts of the religious life altogether, but for more than a quarter of a century now it has taken notice of them. At first the attention was focussed primarily — not to say exclusively — on what must have appeared to be the great central fact of religious experience, the fact of conversion. Psychologists have studied many cases of conversion inductively and have attempted to classify the various forces at work in conversion, to distinguish the different types of religious experience, to determine the period of life in which conversion is most apt to occur, and to discover the laws that control the phenomena of conversion. While they presented their study as a purely inductive investigation into the phenomena of religion as shown in individual experience, and in some cases expressed the laudable desire and intention to keep their own philosophical and religious convictions in the background, they nevertheless in several instances clearly revealed a tendency to look upon conversion as a

purely natural process, just as amenable to the ordinary laws of psychology as any other psychical fact; and to overlook, if not to deny explicitly, its supernatural aspect. The more careful scholars among them ignore, but do not deny, the supernatural in conversion. They explain their silence respecting the deeper aspects of this central fact in religious experience by calling attention to their limitations as psychologists. They can only deal with observed facts and the psychical laws which evidently control them, but have no right to probe into the possible or probable spiritual background, in which these facts find their explanation. They have pointed out that conversion is not a specifically Christian phenomenon, but is also found in other religions; and that it is not necessarily a religious phenomenon, but also occurs in non-religious spheres. In fact, it is but one of the many changes that occur in the period of adolescence, "a sudden readjustment to a larger spiritual environment," a surrender of the old self to a truer one. "At its best," says Starbuck, "it is the individual will coming into harmony with what it feels to be the divine will." [*The Psychology of Religion*, p. 162.] As Pratt understands it, "the essential thing about conversion is just the unification of character, the achievement of a new self." [*The Religious Consciousness*, p. 123.] As to the question, whether there is anything supernatural about conversion, there is a difference of opinion among the psychologists. Coe puts the question: "Shall we therefore conclude that conversion is practically an automatic performance?" And he answers: "Not unless we first define conversion so as to ignore its profound relation to God and to the principle of a good life.... The substance of religious experiences as far transcends their emotional forms as a man transcends the clothes he wears." [*The Spiritual Life*, p. 140.] James feels that an orthodox Christian might ask him, whether his reference of the phenomena of conversion to the subliminal self does not exclude the notion of the direct presence of the Deity in it altogether; and he replies in these words: "I have to say frankly that as a psychologist I do not see why it necessarily should." [*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 242.] He finds that, "if there are higher powers able to impress us, they may gain access only through the subliminal

door.”[p. 243.] The representatives of the New Psychology, that is, of the Behaviourist School and of the School of Psychoanalysis, frankly take the position that conversion may come about in a perfectly natural way, without any supernatural influence. James and others hold that the real secret of the sudden change in conversion lies in some activity of the subliminal self, which may or may not be subject to some divine influence. Students of Psychology are rather generally agreed that there are three distinct steps in conversion, which Ames describes as follows: “First, a sense of perplexity and uneasiness; second, a climax and turning point; and third, a relaxation marked by rest and joy.”[*The Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 258.] It is quite generally agreed that there are at least two outstanding types of conversion, which are designated in various ways. Speaking of these two kinds of conversion, Starbuck says that the one is accompanied with a violent sense of sin, and the other, with a feeling of incompleteness, a struggle after a larger life, and a desire for spiritual illumination. A distinction is made between childhood and adult conversion, between gradual and sudden (violent) conversions, and between intellectual and emotional conversions. These are but different names for the two recognized types of conversion. While conversion in general may be regarded as a rather normal experience, it is sometimes found to take on an abnormal aspect, especially during revivals, and then becomes a pathological phenomenon. As far as the time of conversion is concerned, it is pointed out that conversion does not occur with the same frequency at all periods of life, but belongs almost exclusively to the years between 10 and 25, and is extremely rare after 30. This means that it is peculiarly characteristic of the period of adolescence. Environment, education, and religious training, all affect the nature and the frequency of its occurrence.

2. EVALUATION OF THESE STUDIES. The value of these psychological studies of conversion need not be denied. It would be folly to brush them aside as of little or no significance, or to ignore them just because they do not take due account of the supernatural

in conversion. They shed a welcome light on some of the laws that apply in the psychical life of man, on some of the phenomena that accompany the spiritual crisis in the conscious life of man, and on the various types of conversion and the factors that determine these. They deepen our insight into the different types of conversion, which have always been recognized in Reformed theology, confirm our conviction respecting the three elements that are found in conversion, and are quite in agreement with the theological conviction that conversion is rooted in the subconscious life; though they do not explicitly affirm, and in some cases even deny that it finds its explanation in a divine work of the Holy Spirit below the threshold of consciousness, — the work of regeneration. At the same time we should not overrate these studies. Some of them, as, for instance, the work of James is decidedly one-sided, since it is based entirely on the study of extraordinary conversions, which he found most interesting. Moreover, they have not escaped the danger of carrying the idea of the operation of psychical law in conversion too far, and of overlooking the divine and supernatural side of the important process of conversion. James deals with it all as a moral change and defines it in a general way as “the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”[*Op. cit.*, p. 189.] Others reduce it to a purely natural phenomenon, and even explain it materialistically, as controlled by physical laws. They do not, and even from the nature of the case cannot, go down to the root of the matter, do not and cannot penetrate to the hidden depths from which conversion springs. There is an obvious tendency to challenge the old, orthodox idea of conversion, regarding it as unscientific to teach that the religious nature of man is miraculously implanted. They do not accept the light of the Word of God, and therefore have no standard by which to judge the deeper things of life. Snowden says: “As some psychologists have tried to work out a psychology of the soul without any soul, so some of them have endeavored to construct a psychology of religion without religion. Under their treatment of it

religion has evaporated into a mere subjective feeling or delusion without any objective reality, and such a psychology of religion is baseless and worthless both as psychology and as religion.”[*The Psychology of Religion*, p. 20.]

F. THE AUTHOR OF CONVERSION.

1. GOD THE AUTHOR OF CONVERSION. God only can be called the author of conversion. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. In Ps. 85:4 the poet prays, “Turn us, O God of our salvation,” and in Jer. 31:18 Ephraim prays, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.” A similar prayer is found in Lam. 5:21. In Acts 11:18 Peter calls attention to the fact that God has granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life. A similar statement is found in II Tim. 2:25. There is a twofold operation of God in the conversion of sinners, the one moral and the other hyper-physical. In general it may be said that He works repentance by means of the law, Ps. 19:7; Rom. 3:20, and faith by means of the gospel, Rom. 10:17. Yet we cannot separate these two, for the law also contains a presentation of the gospel, and the gospel confirms the law and threatens with its terrors, II Cor. 5:11. But God also works in an immediate, hyperphysical manner in conversion. The new principle of life that is implanted in the regenerate man, does not issue into conscious action by its own inherent power, but only through the illuminating and fructifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 6:44; Phil. 2:13. To teach otherwise would be Lutheran and Arminian.

2. MAN CO-OPERATES IN CONVERSION. But though God only is the author of conversion, it is of great importance to stress the fact, over against a false passivity, that there is also a certain co-operation of man in conversion. Dr. Kuyper calls attention to the fact that in the Old Testament *shubh* is used 74 times of conversion as a deed of man, and only 15 times, of conversion as a gracious act of God; and that the New Testament represents conversion as a deed of man 26 times, and speaks of it only 2 or 3 times as an act of

God.[*Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, p. 94.] It should be borne in mind, however, that this activity of man always results from a previous work of God in man, Lam. 5:21; Phil. 2:13. That man is active in conversion is quite evident from such passages as Isa. 55:7; Jer. 18:11; Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Acts 2:38; 17:30, and others.

G. THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION.

The Bible speaks in absolute terms of the necessity of regeneration; not so of the necessity of conversion. It tells us plainly that, "Except a man be born again (anew, or, from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3, but does not speak of the need of conversion in the same general way, which allows of no exceptions. Naturally, they who identify the two cannot admit this distinction. Undoubtedly there are passages of Scripture which contain a call to conversion, in order to enjoy the blessings of God, such as Ezek. 33:11; Isa. 55:7, and these imply the necessity of conversion in the case of those addressed or mentioned there. The passage that comes nearest to an absolute declaration is found in Matt. 18:3, "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." But even in this case one might insist that this refers only to the persons addressed. The expressed or implied exhortations to turn about, found in Scripture, come only to those to whom they are addressed and do not necessarily mean that every one must pass through a conscious conversion, in order to be saved. The question as to the necessity of conversion should be answered with discrimination. Those who die in infancy must be regenerated, in order to be saved, but cannot very well experience conversion, a conscious turning from sin unto God. In the case of adults, however, conversion is absolutely essential, but it need not appear in each one's life as a strongly marked crisis. Such a definite crisis can, as a rule, be expected only in the lives of those who, after a life of sin and shame, are arrested in their evil course by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit and by the effectual call to conversion. In them the life of conscious

enmity is at once transformed into a life of friendship with God. It can hardly be looked for, however, in the lives of those who, like John the Baptist and Timothy, served the Lord from early youth. At the same time, conversion is necessary in the case of all adults in the sense that its elements, namely, repentance and faith must be present in their lives. This means that they must in some form experience the essence of conversion.

H. RELATION OF CONVERSION TO OTHER STAGES OF THE SAVING PROCESS.

1. TO REGENERATION. This has already been indicated to some extent. The two words “regeneration” and “conversion” are used synonymously by some. Yet in present day theology they generally refer to different, though closely related matters. The principle of the new life implanted in regeneration comes into active expression in the conscious life of the sinner when he is converted. The change that is effected in the subconscious life in regeneration passes into the conscious life in conversion. Logically, conversion follows regeneration. In the case of those who are regenerated in infancy, there is necessarily a temporal separation of the two, but in the case of those who are regenerated after they have come to years of discretion, the two generally coincide. In regeneration the sinner is entirely passive, but in conversion he is both passive and active. The former can never be repeated, but the latter can to a certain extent, though the *conversio actualis prima* occurs but once.

2. TO EFFECTUAL CALLING. Conversion is the direct result of internal calling. As an effect in man, internal calling and the beginning of conversion really coincide. The situation is not such that God calls the sinner, and that then the sinner in his own strength turns to God. It is exactly in the internal calling that man becomes conscious of the fact that God is working conversion in

him. The truly converted man will feel all along that his conversion is the work of God. This distinguishes him from the man who aims at superficial moral improvement. The latter works in his own strength.

3. TO FAITH. As already indicated, conversion consists in repentance and faith, so that faith is really a part of conversion. Yet we should distinguish here. There are two kinds of true faith, each having a distinct object, namely, (a) a recognition of the truth of God's revelation of redemption, not merely in a detached, historical sense, but in such a way that it is recognized as a reality that cannot be ignored with impunity, because it affects life in a vital way; and (b) a recognition and acceptance of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ, which is saving faith in the proper sense of the word. Now there is no doubt that faith in the former sense is present at once in conversion. The Holy Spirit causes the sinner to see the truth as it applies to his own life, so that he comes under "conviction," and thus becomes conscious of his sin. But he may remain in this stage for some time, so that it is hard to say in how far saving faith, that is, trust in Christ unto salvation, is at once included in conversion. There is no doubt that, logically, repentance and the knowledge of sin precedes the faith that yields to Christ in trusting love.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Why did Beza prefer to call conversion *resipiscentia* rather than *poenitentia*? Why is the term 'repentance' inadequate to express the idea of conversion? How did Luther's conception of repentance differ from that of Calvin? Is conversion always preceded by 'conviction of sin'? Can we speak of prevenient grace relative to conversion? Is conversion an instantaneous act or is it a process? What is meant by the term 'daily conversion'? What is the proper view of the necessity of conversion? Does covenant preaching have a tendency to silence the call to conversion? What is the Methodist conception of conversion? Are the methods of the revival meetings commendable? What about the lasting character of the conversions

of which they boast? Do the statistics of the Psychology of conversion give us any information on this point?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 127-181; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 93-97; *ibid.*, *Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest* II, pp. 197-203; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, pp. 487-495; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 829-849; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, pp. 393-397; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* II, pp. 529-537; Alexander, *Syst. of Bib. Theol.* II, pp. 38-384; Litton, *Introd. to Dogm. Theol.*, pp. 249-258; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 66-81; Pope, *Chr. Dogm.* II, pp. 367-376; Schmid, *Doct. Theol. of the Ev. Luth. Church*, pp. 465, 466, 470-484; Drummond, *Studies in Chr. Doct.*, pp. 488-491; Macintosh, *Theol. as an Empirical Science*, pp. 134-136; Mastricht, *Godgeleerdheit*, IV, 4; Walden, *The Great Meaning of Metanoia*; Jackson, *The Fact of Conversion*; Coe, *The Spiritual Life*; Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*; James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 189-258; Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 257-276; Clark, *The Psychology of Religious Awakening*; Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 122-164; Steven, *The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, pp. 142-298; Hughes, *The New Psychology and Religious Experience*, pp. 213-241; Snowden, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 143-199.

VIII. Faith

The preceding chapter dealt with conversion in general, and also gave a brief description of the negative element of conversion, namely, repentance. The present chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the positive element, which is faith. This is of such central significance in soteriology that it calls for separate treatment. It is best taken up at this point, not only because faith is a part of conversion, but also because it is instrumentally related to justification. Its discussion forms a natural transition to the doctrine of justification *by faith*.

A. SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR FAITH.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT TERMS AND THEIR MEANING.

The Old Testament contains no noun for faith, unless *emunah* be so considered in Hab. 2:4. This word ordinarily means “faithfulness,” Deut. 32:4; Ps. 36:5; 37:3; 40:11, but the way in which the statement of Habakkuk is applied in the New Testament, Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38, would seem to indicate that the prophet used the term in the sense of faith. The most common Old Testament word for “to believe” is *he’emin*, the *hiphil* form of *’aman*. In *qal* it means “to nurse” or “to nourish”; in *niphal*, “to be firm” or “established,” “steadfast”; and in *hiphil*, “to consider established,” “to regard as true,” or “to believe.” The word is construed with the prepositions *beth* and *lamedh*. Construed with the former, it evidently refers to a confident resting on a person or thing or testimony; while, with the latter, it signifies the assent given to a testimony, which is accepted as true. — The word next in importance is *batach*, which is construed with *beth* and means “to confide in,” “to lean upon,” or “to trust.” It does not emphasize the element of intellectual assent, but rather that of confident reliance. In distinction from *he’emin*, which is generally rendered

by *pisteuo* in the Septuagint, this word is usually translated by *elpizo* or *peithomai*. The man who trusts in God is one who fixes all his hope for the present and for the future on Him. — There is still another word, namely, *chasah*, which is used less frequently, and means “to hide one’s self,” or “to flee for refuge.” In this, too, the element of trust is clearly in the foreground.

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS AND THEIR MEANING.

Two words are used throughout the New Testament, namely, *pistis* and the cognate verb *pisteuein*. These do not always have exactly the same connotation.

a. *The different meanings of pistis.* (1) *In classical Greek.* The word *pistis* has two meanings in classical Greek. It denotes: (a) a conviction based on confidence in a person and in his testimony, which as such is distinguished from knowledge resting on personal investigation; and (b) the confidence itself on which such a conviction rests. This is more than a mere intellectual conviction that a person is reliable; it presupposes a personal relation to the object of confidence, a going out of one’s self, to rest in another. The Greeks did not ordinarily use the word in this sense, to express their relation to the gods, since they regarded these as hostile to men, and therefore as objects of fear rather than of trust.—(2) *In the Septuagint.* The transition from the use of the word *pistis* in classical Greek to the New Testament usage, in which the meaning “confidence” or “trust” is all-important, is found in the Septuagint use of the verb *pisteuein* rather than in that of the noun *pistis*, which occurs in it but once with anything like its New Testament meaning. The verb *pisteuein* generally serves as a rendering of the word *he’emin*, and thus expresses the idea of faith both in the sense of assent to the Word of God and of confident trusting in Him. — (3) *In the New Testament.* There are a few instances in which the word has a passive meaning, namely, that of “fidelity” or “faithfulness,” which is its usual meaning in the Old Testament, Rom. 3:3; Gal. 5:22; Tit. 2:10. It is generally used in an active sense. The following special meanings should be distinguished: (a) an

intellectual belief or conviction, resting on the testimony of another, and therefore based on trust in this other rather than on personal investigation, Phil. 1:27; II Cor. 4:13; II Thess. 2:13, and especially in the writings of John; and (b) a confiding trust or confidence in God or, more particularly, in Christ with a view to redemption from sin and to future blessedness. So especially in the Epistles of Paul, Rom. 3:22,25; 5:1,2; 9:30,32; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8; 3:12, and many other passages. This trust must be distinguished from that on which the intellectual trust mentioned under (a) above, rests. The order in the successive stages of faith is as follows: (a) general confidence in God and Christ; (b) acceptance of their testimony on the basis of that trust; and (c) yielding to Christ and trusting in Him for the salvation of the soul. The last is specifically called saving faith.

b. *The different constructions of pisteuein and their meaning.* We have the following constructions: (1) *Pisteuein with the dative.* This generally denotes believing assent. If the object is a person, it is ordinarily employed in a somewhat pregnant sense, including the deeply religious idea of a devoted, believing trust. When the object is a thing, it is usually the Word of God, and when it is a person, it is generally either God or Christ, John 4:50; 5:47; Acts 16:34; Rom. 4:3; II Tim. 1:12. — (2) *Pisteuein followed by hoti.* In this construction the conjunction generally serves to introduce what is believed. On the whole this construction is weaker than the preceding. Of the twenty passages in which it is found, fourteen occur in the writings of John. In a couple of cases the matter believed hardly rises into the religious sphere, John 9:18; Acts 9:26, while in some of the others it is decidedly of soteriological import, Matt. 9:28; Rom. 10:9; I Thess. 4:14. — (3) *Pisteuein with prepositions.* Here the deeper meaning of the word, that of firm trustful reliance, comes to its full rights. The following constructions come into consideration: (a) *Construction with en.* This is the most frequent construction in the Septuagint, though it is all but absent from the New Testament. The only certain case is Mark 1:15, where the object is the gospel. Other possible instances are John 3:15; Eph. 1:13, where the object would be Christ. The

implication of this construction seems to be that of a firmly fixed confidence in its object. (b) *Construction with epi and the dative*. It is found only in the quotation from Isa. 28:16, which appears in three passages, namely, Rom. 9:33; 10:11; I Pet. 2:6, and in Luke 24:25; I Tim. 1:16. It expresses the idea of a steady and restful repose, a reliance on its object. (c) *Construction with epi and the accusative*. This is used seven times in the New Testament. In a couple of cases the object is God, as He operates in the saving of the soul in Christ; in all the others it is Christ. This construction includes the idea of moral motion, of mental direction towards the object. The main idea is that of turning with confident trust to Jesus Christ. (d) *Construction with eis*. This is the most characteristic construction of the New Testament. It occurs forty-nine times. About fourteen of these instances are Johannine, and the remainder Pauline. Except in one case, the object is always a person, rarely God, and most commonly Christ. This construction has a very pregnant meaning, expressing, as it does, “an absolute transference of trust from ourselves to another, a complete self-surrender to God.” Cf. John 2:11; 3:16,18,36; 4:39; 14:1; Rom. 10:14; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 1:29.

B. FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS USED TO DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH.

There are several figurative expressions of the activity of faith in Scripture. The following are some of the most important.

1. It is spoken of as a looking to Jesus, John 3:14,15 (comp. Num. 21:9). This is a very appropriate figure, because it comprises the various elements of faith, especially when it refers to a steadfast looking to anyone, as in the passage indicated. There is in it an act of perception (intellectual element), a deliberate fixing of the eye on the object (volitional element), and a certain satisfaction to which this concentration testifies (emotional element).

2. It is also represented as a hungering and thirsting, an eating and drinking, Matt. 5:6; John 6:50-58; 4:14. When men really hunger and thirst spiritually, they feel that something is wanting, are conscious of the indispensable character of that which is lacking, and endeavor to obtain it. All this is characteristic of the activity of faith. In eating and drinking we not only have the conviction that the necessary food and drink is present, but also the confident expectation that it will satisfy us, just as in appropriating Christ by faith we have a certain measure of confidence that He will save us.

3. Finally, there are also the figures of coming to Christ and receiving Him, John 5:40; 7:37 (cf. vs. 38); 6:44,65; 1:12. The figure of coming to Christ pictures faith as an action in which man looks away from himself and his own merits, to be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and that of receiving Christ stresses the fact that faith is an appropriating organ.

C. THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH IN HISTORY.

1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION. From the very earliest times of the Christian Church faith stood out in the minds of the leaders as the one great condition of salvation. Alongside of it repentance also soon became rather prominent. At the same time there was little reflection at first on the nature of faith and but little understanding of the relation of faith to the other parts of the *ordo salutis*. There was no current definition of faith. While there was a tendency to use the word "faith" to denote the acceptance of the truth on testimony, it was also in some cases employed in a deeper sense, so as to include the idea of self-surrender to the truth intellectually received. The Alexandrians contrasted *pistis* and *gnosis*, and regarded the former primarily as initial and imperfect knowledge. Tertullian stressed the fact that faith accepts a thing on authority, and not because it is warranted by human reason. He also used the term in an objective sense, as a

designation of that which must be believed, — the *regula fidei*. Even up to the time of Augustine little attention was devoted to the nature of faith, though it was always acknowledged to be the pre-eminent means in the appropriation of salvation. Augustine, however, gave the matter a greater measure of consideration. He spoke of faith in more than one sense. Sometimes he regarded it as nothing more than intellectual assent to the truth. But he conceived of evangelical or justifying faith as including also the elements of self-surrender and love. This faith is perfected in love and thus becomes the principle of good works. He did not have a proper conception, however, of the relation between faith and justification. This is partly due to the fact that he did not carefully distinguish between justification and sanctification. The deeper conception of faith that is found in Augustine was not shared by the Church in general. There was a tendency to confound faith with orthodoxy, that is, with the holding of an orthodox faith. The Scholastics distinguished between a *fides informis*, that is, a mere intellectual assent to the truth taught by the Church, and a *fides formata (charitate)*, that is, a faith informed (given a characteristic form) by love, and regarded the latter as the only faith that justifies, since it involves an infusion of grace. It is only as *fides formata* that faith becomes active for good and becomes the first of the theological virtues by which man is placed in the right relation to God. Strictly speaking it is the love by which faith is perfected that justifies. Thus in faith itself a foundation was laid for human merit. Man is justified, not exclusively by the imputation of the merits of Christ, but also by inherent grace. Thomas Aquinas defines the virtue of faith as a “habit of the mind, by reason of which eternal life has its inception in us, inasmuch as it causes the intellect to give its assent to things that are not seen.”

2. AFTER THE REFORMATION. While the Roman Catholics stressed the fact that justifying faith is merely assent and has its seat in the understanding, the Reformers generally regarded it as *fiducia* (trust), having its seat in the will. On the relative importance of the elements in faith there have been differences,

however, even among Protestants. Some regard the definition of Calvin as superior to that of the Heidelberg Catechism. Says Calvin: “We shall now have a full definition of faith if we say that it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.”[*Inst.* III. 2,7.] The Heidelberg Catechism, on the other hand, also brings in the element of confidence when it answers the question, “What is true faith?” as follows: “True faith is not only a sure knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a firm confidence which the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ’s merits.”[Q. 21.] But it is quite evident from the connection that Calvin means to include the element of confidence in the “firm and sure knowledge” of which he speaks. Speaking of the boldness with which we may approach God in prayer, he even says: “Such boldness springs only from confidence in the divine favour and salvation. So true is this, that the term *faith* is often used as equivalent to *confidence*.”[*Ibid.*, III. 2,15.] He absolutely rejects the fiction of the Schoolmen who insist “that faith is an assent with which any despiser of God may receive what is delivered in Scripture.”[*Ibid.* III. 2,8.] But there is an even more important point of difference between the Reformers’ conception of faith and that of the Scholastics. The latter recognized in faith itself some real and even meritorious efficacy (*meritum ex congruo*) in disposing to, and in procuring or obtaining justification. The Reformers, on the other hand, were unanimous and explicit in teaching that justifying faith does not justify by any meritorious or inherent efficacy of its own, but only as the instrument for receiving or laying hold on what God has provided in the merits of Christ. They regarded this faith primarily as a gift of God and only secondarily as an activity of man in dependence on God. The Arminians revealed a Romanizing tendency, when they conceived of faith as a meritorious work of man, on the basis of which he is accepted in favor by God. Schleiermacher, the father of modern

theology, hardly mentions saving faith and knows absolutely nothing of faith as childlike trust in God. He says that faith “is nothing but the incipient experience of the satisfaction of our spiritual need by Christ.” It is a new psychological experience, a new consciousness, rooted in a feeling, not of Christ, nor of any doctrine, but of the harmony of the Infinite, of the Whole of things, in which the soul finds God. Ritschl agreed with Schleiermacher in holding that faith springs up as the result of contact with the divine reality, but finds its object, not in any idea or doctrine, nor in the whole of things, but in the Person of Christ, as the supreme revelation of God. It is not a passive assent, but an active principle. In it man makes God’s self-end, that is, the kingdom of God, his own, begins to work for the kingdom, and in doing this finds salvation. The views of Schleiermacher and Ritschl characterize a great deal of modern liberal theology. Faith, in this theology, is not a heaven-wrought experience, but a human achievement; not the mere receiving of a gift, but a meritorious action; not the acceptance of a doctrine, but a “making Christ Master” in an attempt to pattern one’s life after the example of Christ. This view met with strong opposition, however, in the theology of crisis, which stresses the fact that saving faith is never a merely natural psychological experience, is strictly speaking an act of God rather than of man, never constitutes a permanent possession of man, and is in itself merely a *hohlraum* (empty space), quite incapable of effecting salvation. Barth and Brunner regard faith simply as the divine response, wrought in man by God, to the Word of God in Christ, that is, not so much to any doctrine, as to the divine command or the divine act in the work of redemption. It is the affirmative answer, the “yes” to the call of God, a “yes” that is elicited by God Himself.

D. THE IDEA OF FAITH IN SCRIPTURE.

1. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. Evidently the New Testament writers, in stressing faith as the fundamental principle of the

religious life, were not conscious of shifting ground and of departing from the Old Testament representation. They regard Abraham as the type of all true believers (Rom. 4; Gal. 3; Heb. 11; Jas. 2), and those who are of faith as the true sons of Abraham (Rom. 2:28,29; 4:12,16; Gal. 3:9). Faith is never treated as a novelty of the new covenant, nor is any distinction drawn between the faith of the two covenants. There is a sense of continuity, and the proclamation of faith is regarded as the same in both dispensations, John 5:46; 12:38,39; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; 10:16; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38. In both Testaments faith is the same radical self-commitment to God, not merely as the highest good of the soul, but as the gracious Saviour of the sinner. The only difference that is apparent, is due to the progressive work of redemption, and this is more or less evident even within the confines of the Old Testament itself.

a. *In the patriarchal period.* In the earlier portions of the Old Testament there is but little in the line of abstract statement respecting the way of salvation. The essence of the religion of the patriarchs is exhibited to us in action. The promise of God is in the foreground, and the case of Abraham is designed to set forth the idea that the proper response to it is that of faith. The whole life of Noah was determined by trust in God and in His promises, but it is especially Abraham that is set before us as the typical believer, who commits himself to God with unwavering trust in His promises and is justified by faith.

b. *In the period of the law.* The giving of the law did not effect a fundamental change in the religion of Israel, but merely introduced a change in its external form. The law was not substituted for the promise; neither was faith supplanted by works. Many of the Israelites, indeed, looked upon the law in a purely legalistic spirit and sought to base their claim to salvation on a scrupulous fulfilment of it as a body of external precepts. But in the case of those who understood its real nature, who felt the inwardness and spirituality of the law, it served to deepen the sense of sin and to sharpen the conviction that salvation could be expected only from

the grace of God. The essence of real piety was ever-increasingly seen to consist in a confident trust in the God of salvation. While the Old Testament clearly stresses the fear of the Lord, a large number of expressions, such as hoping, trusting, seeking refuge in God, looking to Him, relying on Him, fixing the heart on Him, and cleaving to Him — make it abundantly evident that this fear is not a craven but a child-like, reverent fear, and emphasize the necessity of that loving self-commitment to God which is the essence of saving faith. Even in the period of the law faith is distinctly soteriological, looking to the Messianic salvation. It is a trusting in the God of salvation, and a firm reliance on His promises for the future.

2. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. When the Messiah came in fulfilment of the prophecies, bringing the hoped-for salvation, it became necessary for the vehicles of God's revelation to direct God's people to the person of their Redeemer. This was all the more necessary in view of the fact that the fulfilment came in a form which many did not expect, and which apparently did not correspond with the promise.

a. *In the Gospels.* The demand for faith in Jesus as the Redeemer, promised and hoped for, appeared as something characteristic of the new age. "To believe" meant to become a Christian. This demand seemed to create a gulf between the old dispensation and the new. The beginning of the latter is even called "the coming of faith," Gal. 3:23,25. It is the characteristic thing of the Gospels that in them Jesus is constantly offering Himself as the object of faith, and that in connection with the highest concerns of the soul. The Gospel of John stresses the higher aspects of this faith more than the Synoptics.

b. *In the Acts.* In the Acts of the Apostles faith is required in the same general sense. By the preaching of the apostles men are brought to the obedience of faith in Christ; and this faith becomes the formative principle of the new community. Different tendencies developed in the Church and gave rise to the different modes of

dealing with faith that became apparent in the writings of the New Testament.

c. *In the Epistle of James.* James had to rebuke the Jewish tendency to conceive of the faith that was well pleasing to God as a mere intellectual assent to the truth, a faith that did not yield appropriate fruit. His idea of the faith that justifies does not differ from that of Paul, but he stresses the fact that this faith must manifest itself in good works. If it does not, it is a dead faith, and is, in fact, non-existent.

d. *In the Epistles of Paul.* Paul had to contend particularly with the ingrained legalism of Jewish thought. The Jew boasted of the righteousness of the law. Consequently, the apostle had to vindicate the place of faith as the only instrument of salvation. In doing this, he naturally dwelt a great deal on Christ as the object of faith, since it is from this object only that faith derives its efficacy. Faith justifies and saves only because it lays hold on Jesus Christ.

e. *In the Epistle to the Hebrews.* The writer of Hebrews also regards Christ as the proper object of saving faith, and teaches that there is no righteousness except through faith, 10:38; 11:7. But the danger against which the writer of this letter had to guard was not that of falling from faith into works, but rather that of falling from faith into despair. He speaks of faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” 11:1. He exhorts the readers to an attitude of faith, which will enable them to rise from the seen to the unseen, from the present to the future, from the temporal to the eternal, and which will enable them to be patient in the midst of sufferings.

f. *In the Epistles of Peter.* Peter also writes to readers that were in danger of becoming discouraged, though not of falling back into Judaism. The circumstances in which they found themselves prompted him to lay special emphasis on the relation of faith to the consummated salvation, in order to quicken within their hearts the

hope that would sustain them in their present trials, the hope of an unseen and eternal glory. The Second Epistle stresses the importance of the knowledge of faith as a safeguard against prevailing errors.

g. *In the Writings of John.* John had to contend with an incipient Gnosticism, which falsely emphasized knowledge (*gnosis*) and despised simple faith. The former was supposed to carry with it a far greater degree of blessedness than the latter. Hence John makes it a point to magnify the blessings of faith. He insists, not so much on the certainty and glory of the future inheritance which faith secures, as on the fulness of the present enjoyment of salvation which it brings. Faith embraces knowledge as a firm conviction and makes believers at once possessors of the new life and of eternal salvation. Meanwhile John does not neglect the fact that it also reaches out into the future.

E. FAITH IN GENERAL.

The word “faith” is not exclusively a religious and theological term. It is often used in a general and non-religious sense, and even so has more than one connotation. The following uses of the term deserve particular attention. It may denote:

1. FAITH AS LITTLE MORE THAN MERE OPINION. The word “faith” is sometimes used in a rather loose and popular sense, to denote a persuasion of the truth which is stronger than mere opinion, and yet weaker than knowledge. Even Locke defined faith as “the assent of the mind to propositions which are probably, but not certainly, true.” In popular language we often say of that of which we are not absolutely sure, but which we at the same time feel constrained to recognize as true: “I believe that, but I am not sure of it.” Consequently some philosophers have found the distinguishing characteristic of faith in the lesser degree of certainty which it yields—Locke, Hume, Kant, and others.

2. FAITH AS IMMEDIATE CERTAINTY. In connection with science faith is often spoken of as *immediate* certainty. There is a certainty which man obtains by means of perception, experience, and logical deduction, but there is also an intuitive certainty. In every science there are axioms that cannot be demonstrated and intuitive convictions that are not acquired by perception or logical deduction. Dr. Bavinck says “Het gebied der onmiddellijke zekerheid is veel grooter dan dat der demonstratieve, en deze laatste is altijd weer op de eerste gebouwd, en staat en valt met deze. Ook is deze intuïtieve zekerheid niet minder maar grooter dan die, welke langs den weg van waarneming en logische demonstratie verkregen wordt.” The sphere of immediate certainty is greater than that of demonstrative certainty. In both cases now mentioned faith is regarded exclusively as an activity of the intellect.

3. FAITH AS A CONVICTION BASED ON TESTIMONY AND INCLUDING TRUST. In common parlance the word “faith” is often used to denote the conviction that the testimony of another is true, and that what he promises will be done; a conviction based only on his recognized veracity and fidelity. It is really a believing acceptance of what another says on the basis of the confidence which he inspires. And this faith, this conviction based on confidence, often leads to a further confidence: trust in a friend in time of need, in the ability of a doctor to give aid in times of sickness, and in that of a pilot to guide the vessel into the harbor, and so on. In this case faith is more than a mere matter of the intellect. The will is brought into play, and the element of trust comes to the foreground.

F. FAITH IN THE RELIGIOUS SENSE AND PARTICULARLY SAVING FAITH.

The distinguishing characteristics of faith in the theological sense have not always been stated in the same way. This will become

evident, when we consider the concept, the elements, the object, and the ground of faith.

1. THE CONCEPT OF FAITH: FOUR KINDS OF FAITH DISTINGUISHED. As a psychological phenomenon faith in the religious sense does not differ from faith in general. If faith in general is a persuasion of the truth founded on the testimony of one in whom we have confidence and on whom we rely, and therefore rests on authority, Christian faith in the most comprehensive sense is man's persuasion of the truth of Scripture on the basis of the authority of God. The Bible does not always speak of religious faith in the same sense, and this gave rise to the following distinctions in theology.

a. *Historical faith.* This is a purely intellectual apprehension of the truth, devoid of any moral or spiritual purpose. The name does not imply that it embraces only historical facts and events to the exclusion of moral and spiritual truths; nor that it is based on the testimony of history, for it may have reference to contemporaneous facts or events, John 3:2. It is rather expressive of the idea that this faith accepts the truths of Scripture as one might accept a history in which one is not personally interested. This faith may be the result of tradition, of education, of public opinion, of an insight into the moral grandeur of Scripture, and so on, accompanied with the general operations of the Holy Spirit. It may be very orthodox and Scriptural, but is not rooted in the heart, Matt. 7:26; Acts 26:27,28; Jas. 2:19. It is a *fides humana*, and not a *fides divina*.

b. *Miraculous faith.* The so-called miraculous faith is a persuasion wrought in the mind of a person that a miracle will be performed by him or in his behalf. God can give a person a work to do that transcends his natural powers and enable him to do it. Every attempt to perform a work of that kind requires faith. This is very clear in cases in which man appears merely as the instrument of God or as the one who announces that God will work a miracle, for such a man must have full confidence that God will not put him to

shame. In the last analysis God only works miracles, though He may do it through human instrumentality. *This is faith of miracles in the active sense*, Matt. 17:20; Mark 16:17,18. It is not necessarily, but may be, accompanied with saving faith. *The faith of miracles may also be passive*, namely, the persuasion that God will work a miracle in one's behalf. It, too, may or may not be accompanied with saving faith, Matt. 8:10-13; John 11:22 (comp. verses 25-27); 11:40; Acts 14:9. The question is often raised, whether such a faith has a legitimate place in the life of man to-day. Roman Catholics answer this question affirmatively, while Protestants are inclined to give a negative answer. They point out that there is no Scriptural basis for such a faith, but do not deny that miracles may still occur. God is entirely sovereign also in this respect, and the Word of God leads us to expect another cycle of miracles in the future.

c. *Temporal faith*. This is a persuasion of the truths of religion which is accompanied with some promptings of the conscience and a stirring of the affections, but is not rooted in a regenerate heart. The name is derived from Matt. 13:20,21. It is called a temporary faith, because it is not permanent and fails to maintain itself in days of trial and persecution. This does not mean that it may not last as long as life lasts. It is quite possible that it will perish only at death, but then it surely ceases. This faith is sometimes called a hypocritical faith, but that is not entirely correct, for it does not necessarily involve conscious hypocrisy. They who possess this faith usually believe that they have the true faith. It might better be called an imaginary faith, seemingly genuine, but evanescent in character. It differs from historical faith in the personal interest it shows in the truth and in the reaction of the feelings upon it. Great difficulty may be experienced in attempting to distinguish it from true saving faith. Christ says of the one who so believes: "He hath no root in himself," Matt. 13:21. It is a faith that does not spring from the root implanted in regeneration, and therefore is not an expression of the new life that is embedded in the depths of the soul. In general it may be said that temporal faith is grounded in the

emotional life and seeks personal enjoyment rather than the glory of God.

d. *True Saving faith.* True saving faith is a faith that has its seat in the heart and is rooted in the regenerate life. A distinction is often made between the *habitus* and the *actus* of faith. Back of both of these, however, lies the *semen fidei*. This faith is not first of all an activity of man, but a potentiality wrought by God in the heart of the sinner. The seed of faith is implanted in man in regeneration. Some theologians speak of this as the *habitus* of faith, but others more correctly call it the *semen fidei*. It is only after God has implanted the seed of faith in the heart that man can exercise faith. This is apparently what Barth has in mind also, when he, in his desire to stress the fact that salvation is exclusively a work of God, says that God rather than man is the subject of faith. The conscious exercise of faith gradually forms a *habitus*, and this acquires a fundamental and determining significance for the further exercise of faith. When the Bible speaks of faith, it generally refers to faith as an activity of man, though born of the work of the Holy Spirit. Saving faith may be defined as *a certain conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the gospel, and a hearty reliance (trust) on the promises of God in Christ.* In the last analysis, it is true, Christ is the object of saving faith, but He is offered to us only in the gospel.

2. THE ELEMENTS OF FAITH. In speaking of the different elements of faith we should not lose sight of the fact that faith is an activity of man as a whole, and not of any part of man. Moreover, the soul functions in faith through its ordinary faculties, and not through any special faculty. It is an exercise of the soul which has this in common with all similar exercises, that it appears simple, and yet on closer scrutiny is found to be complex and intricate. And therefore, in order to obtain a proper conception of faith, it is necessary to distinguish between the various elements which it comprises.

a. *An intellectual element (notitia)*. There is an element of knowledge in faith, in connection with which the following points should be considered:

(1) *The character of this knowledge*. The knowledge of faith consists in a positive recognition of the truth, in which man accepts as true whatsoever God says in His Word, and especially what He says respecting the deep depravity of man and the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Over against Rome the position must be maintained that this sure knowledge belongs to the essence of faith; and in opposition to such theologians as Sandeman, Wardlaw, Alexander, Chalmers, and others, that a mere intellectual acceptance of the truth is not the whole of faith. On the one hand it would be an over-estimation of the knowledge of faith, if it were regarded as a complete comprehension of the objects of faith. But on the other hand it would also be an under-estimation of it, if it were considered as a mere taking notice of the things believed, without the conviction that they are true. Some modern liberals take this view and consequently like to speak of faith as a venture. It is a spiritual insight into the truths of the Christian religion that find response in the heart of the sinner.

(2) *The certainty of this knowledge*. The knowledge of faith should not be regarded as less certain than other knowledge. Our Heidelberg Catechism assures us that true faith is among other things also “a *certain* (sure, incontestable) knowledge.”[Q. 21.] This is in harmony with Heb. 11:1, which speaks of it as “the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen” It makes future and unseen things subjectively real and certain for the believer. The knowledge of faith is mediated for, and imparted to, us by the testimony of God in His Word, and is accepted by us as certain and reliable on the basis of the veracity of God. The certainty of this knowledge has its warrant in God Himself, and consequently nothing can be more certain. And it is quite essential that this should be so, for faith is concerned with spiritual and eternal things, in which certainty is needed, if anywhere. There must be certainty

as to the reality of the object of faith; if there is not, faith is in vain. Machen deplors the fact that many lose sight of this fact in the present day. Says he: "The whole trouble is that faith is being considered as a beneficent quality of the soul without respect to the reality or unreality of its object; and the moment faith comes to be considered in that way, in that moment it is destroyed." [*What Is Faith?* p. 174.]

(3) *The measure of this knowledge.* It is impossible to determine with precision just how much knowledge is absolutely required in saving faith. If saving faith is the acceptance of Christ as He is offered in the gospel, the question naturally arises, How much of the gospel must a man know, in order to be saved? Or, to put it in the words of Dr. Machen: "What, to put it baldly, are the minimum doctrinal requirements, in order that a man may be a Christian?" [*Op cit.*, p. 155.] In general it may be said that it must be sufficient to give the believer some idea of the object of faith. All true saving faith must contain at least a minimum of knowledge, not so much of the divine revelation in general as of the Mediator and His gracious operations. The more real knowledge one has of the truths of redemption, the richer and fuller one's faith will be, if all other things are equal. Naturally one who accepts Christ by a true faith, will also be ready and willing to accept God's testimony as a whole. It is of the utmost importance, especially in our day, that the churches should see to it that their members have a fairly good, and not merely a hazy, understanding of the truth. Particularly in this undogmatic age, they should be far more diligent than they are in the indoctrination of their youth.

b. *An emotional element (assensus).* Barth calls attention to the fact that the time when man accepts Christ by faith is the existential moment of his life, in which he ceases to consider the object of faith in a detached and disinterested way, and begins to feel a lively interest in it. It is not necessary to adopt Barth's peculiar construction of the doctrine of faith, to admit the truth of what he says on this point. When one embraces Christ by faith, he has a

deep conviction of the truth and reality of the object of faith, feels that it meets an important need in his life, and is conscious of an absorbing interest in it, — and this is assent. It is very difficult to distinguish this assent from the knowledge of faith just described, because, as we have seen, it is exactly the distinguishing characteristic of the knowledge of saving faith, that it carries with it a conviction of the truth and reality of its object. Hence some theologians have shown an inclination to limit the knowledge of faith to a mere taking cognizance of the object of faith; but (1) this is contrary to experience, for in true faith there is no knowledge that does not include a hearty conviction of the truth and reality of its object and an interest in it; and (2) this would make the knowledge in saving faith identical with that which is found in a purely historical faith, while the difference between historical and saving faith lies in part exactly at this point. Because it is so difficult to make a clear distinction, some theologians prefer to speak of only two elements in saving faith, namely, knowledge and personal trust. These are the two elements mentioned in the Heidelberg Catechism when it says that true faith “is not only a *certain knowledge* whereby I hold for true all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a *hearty trust* which the Holy Ghost works in me by the gospel.”[Q. 21.] It probably deserves preference to regard knowledge and assent simply as two aspects of the same element in faith. Knowledge may then be regarded as its more passive and receptive side, and assent as its more active and transitive side.

c. *A volitional element (fiducia)*. This is the crowning element of faith. Faith is not merely a matter of the intellect, nor of the intellect and the emotions combined; it is also a matter of the will, determining the direction of the soul, an act of the soul going out towards its object and appropriating this. Without this activity the object of faith, which the sinner recognizes as true and real and entirely applicable to his present needs, remains outside of him. And in saving faith it is a matter of life and death that the object be appropriated. This third element consists in a personal trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, including a surrender of the soul as

guilty and defiled to Christ, and a reception and appropriation of Christ as the source of pardon and of spiritual life. Taking all these elements in consideration, it is quite evident that the seat of faith cannot be placed in the intellect, nor in the feelings, nor in the will exclusively, but only in the heart, the central organ of man's spiritual being, out of which are the issues of life. In answer to the question whether this *fiducia* (trust) necessarily includes an element of personal assurance, it may be said, in opposition to the Roman Catholics and Arminians, that this is undoubtedly the case. It naturally carries with it a certain feeling of safety and security, of gratitude and joy. Faith, which is in itself certainty, tends to awaken a sense of security and a feeling of assurance in the soul. In the majority of cases this is at first more implicit and hardly penetrates into the sphere of conscious thought; it is something vaguely felt rather than clearly perceived. But in the measure in which faith grows and the activities of faith increase, the consciousness of the security and safety which it brings also becomes greater. Even what theologians generally call "refuge-seeking trust" (toevluchtnemend vertrouwen) conveys to the soul a certain measure of security. This is quite different from the position of Barth, who stresses the fact that faith is a constantly repeated act, is ever anew a leap of despair and a leap in the dark, and never becomes a continuous possession of man; and who therefore rules out the possibility of any subjective assurance of faith.

3. THE OBJECT OF FAITH. In giving an answer to the question as to what is the object of true saving faith, we shall have to speak with discrimination, since it is possible to speak of this faith in a general and in a special sense. There is:

a. *A fides generalis.* By this is meant saving faith in the more general sense of the word. Its object is the whole divine revelation as contained in the Word of God. Everything that is explicitly taught in Scripture or can be deduced from it by good and necessary inference, belongs to the object of faith in this general sense. According to the Church of Rome it is incumbent on its members to

believe whatsoever the *ecclesia docens* declares to be a part of God's revelation, and this includes the so-called apostolic tradition. It is true that the "teaching church" does not claim the right to make new articles of faith, but it does claim the right to determine authoritatively what the Bible teaches and what, according to tradition, belongs to the teachings of Christ and His apostles. And this affords a great deal of latitude.

b. *A fides specialis*. This is saving faith in the more limited sense of the word. While true faith in the Bible as the Word of God is absolutely necessary, that is not yet the specific act of faith which justifies and therefore saves directly. It must and as a matter of fact does lead on to a more special faith. There are certain doctrines concerning Christ and His work, and certain promises made in Him to sinful men, which the sinner must receive and which must lead him to put his trust in Christ. The object of special faith, then, is Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation through Him. The special act of faith consists in receiving Christ and resting on Him as He is presented in the gospel, John 3:15,16,18; 6:40. Strictly speaking, it is not the act of faith as such, but rather that which is received by faith, which justifies and therefore saves the sinner.

4. THE GROUND OF FAITH. The ultimate ground on which faith rests, lies in the veracity and faithfulness of God, in connection with the promises of the gospel. But because we have no knowledge of this apart from the Word of God, this can also be, and frequently is, called the ultimate ground of faith. In distinction from the former, however, it might be called the proximate ground. The means by which we recognize the revelation embodied in Scripture as the very Word of God is, in the last analysis, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, I John 5:7 (Am. Rev. Version): "And it is the Spirit which beareth witness because the Spirit is the truth." Cf. also Rom. 4:20,21; 8:16; Eph. 1:13; I John 4:13; 5:10. Roman Catholics find the ultimate ground of faith in the Church; Rationalists acknowledge only reason as such; Schleiermacher seeks it in Christian

experience; and Kant, Ritschl, and many modern liberals place it in the moral needs of human nature.

G. FAITH AND ASSURANCE.

A very important question arises here, namely, whether assurance belongs to the essence of faith, or is something additional that is not included in faith. Because the expression “assurance of faith” is not always used in the same sense, it is necessary to discriminate carefully. There is a twofold assurance, namely, (1) The objective assurance of faith, which is “the certain and undoubting conviction that Christ is all He professes to be, and will do all He promises.” It is generally agreed that this assurance is of the essence of faith. (2) The subjective assurance of faith, or the assurance of grace and salvation, which consists in a sense of security and safety, rising in many instances to the height of an “assured conviction that the individual believer has had his sins pardoned and his soul saved.” As to the relation of this assurance to the essence of faith opinions differ.

1. The Roman Catholic Church denies, not only that personal assurance belongs to the essence of faith, but even that this is an *actus reflexus* or fruit of faith. It teaches that believers cannot be sure of their salvation, except in those rare cases in which assurance is given by special revelation. This is a natural result of the Semi-Pelagianism and of the confessional system of Rome. The early Arminians, who shared the Semi-Pelagian position of Rome, took a very similar stand. Their view was condemned by the Synod of Dort.

2. The Reformers reacted against the unsound and pernicious position of the Church of Rome. In their protest they occasionally stressed assurance one-sidedly as the most important element of faith. They sometimes spoke as if one who lacks the assurance of salvation, the positive conviction that his sins are forgiven, did not possess true faith. The *fiducia* of faith was sometimes represented

by them as the assured trust of the sinner that all his sins are pardoned for the sake of Christ. Yet it is quite evident from their writings, (a) that they did not mean to teach that this *fiducia* did not include other elements; and (b) that they did not intend to deny that true children of God must frequently struggle with all kinds of doubts and uncertainties.[Cf. my *The Assurance of Faith*, pp. 23 f.]

3. The Reformed confessional standards vary somewhat. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches, also in reaction to Rome, that the *fiducia* of faith consists in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. It places itself entirely on the standpoint of the Reformers, and conceives of the assurance of salvation as belonging to the essence of faith. The Canons of Dort take the position that this assurance in the elect is not the fruit of a special revelation, but springs from faith in God's promises, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and from the exercise of a good conscience and the doing of good works, and is enjoyed according to the measure of faith. This certainly implies that it belongs in some measure to the essence of faith. It is explicitly stated, however, that believers frequently have to struggle with carnal doubts, so that they are not always sensible of the assurance of faith. The Westminster Confession, speaking of the full assurance of faith, asserts that this does not so belong to the essence of faith that a true believer may not have to wait for it a long time. This has given some Presbyterian theologians occasion to deny that personal assurance belongs to the essence of faith. Yet the Confession does not say this, and there are reasons to think that it did not intend to teach this. The Marrowmen in Scotland certainly gave a different interpretation of its position.[Cf. *The Assurance of Faith*, pp. 24-29.]

4. After the confessional period there were several departures from this position.

a. Antinomians considered this assurance to be the whole of the essence of faith. They ignored all other activities of faith, and regarded faith simply as an intellectual acceptance of the

proposition: Thy sins are forgiven thee. De Labadie (Dutch theologian) recognized no one as a member of the Church who was not fully assured.[Cf. Heppe, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, pp. 240-374.]

b. On the other hand a pietistic Nomism asserted that assurance does not belong to the very being, but only to the well-being of faith; and that it can be secured, except by special revelation, only by continuous and conscientious introspection. All kinds of “marks of the spiritual life,” derived not from Scripture but from the lives of approved Christians, became the standard of self-examination. The outcome proved, however, that this method was not calculated to produce assurance, but rather tended to lead to ever-increasing doubt, confusion, and uncertainty.

c. The Methodists aim at a methodical conversion that carries immediate certainty with it. They place men before the law, cause them to see their utter sinfulness and terrible guilt, and frighten them with the terrors of the Lord. And after they have thus brought them under the terrifying influence of the law, they at once introduce them to the full and free gospel of redemption, which merely calls for a willing acceptance of Christ as their Saviour. In a single moment sinners are transported on waves of emotion from the deepest sorrow into the most exalted joy. And this sudden change carries with it an immediate assurance of redemption. He who believes, is also sure that he is redeemed. This does not mean, however, that he is also certain of ultimate salvation. This is a certainty to which the consistent Methodist cannot attain since he believes in a falling away of the saints.

d. Among Reformed theologians there is a difference of opinion. Many Presbyterians deny that faith itself includes assurance; and in Reformed circles some share this denial. Kuyper, Bavinck, and Vos, however, correctly hold that true faith, as including trust, carries with it a sense of security, which may vary in degree. There is also an assurance of faith, however, that is the fruit of reflection. It is

possible to make faith itself an object of reflection, and thus to arrive at a subjective assurance that does not belong to the essence of faith. In that case we conclude from what we experience in our own life to the presence of the work of the Holy Spirit within us, cf. I John 2:9-11; 3:9,10, 18,19; 4:7,20.[Cf. further, *The Assurance of Faith*, chap. III.]

H. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CONCEPTION OF FAITH.

Three points deserve our attention here:

1. The Church of Rome obliterates the distinction between historical and saving faith by teaching that faith consists in a mere assent to the doctrines of the Church. This faith is one of the seven preparations for justification in baptism, and therefore necessarily precedes this; but as a purely intellectual activity it naturally does not lead to salvation. A man may have true, that is, Biblical faith, and yet be lost. In so far the Church of Rome applies her principle of externalization also to faith.

2. It has also virtually removed the element of knowledge from faith. One may be considered a true believer, if one is but ready to believe what the Church teaches, without really knowing what this is. Such a faith is called a *fides implicita* in distinction from the *fides explicita*, which includes knowledge. By teaching that it is sufficient to believe what the *ecclesia docens* teaches, the Roman Catholic Church applies the principle of clericalism.

3. There is still another point which characterizes the Roman Catholic doctrine of faith, namely, the distinction between a *fides informis* and a *fides formata*. The former is the mere assent to the doctrine of the Church, while the other is a faith which includes love as a formative principle and is perfected in love. This is the faith that really justifies.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What was the conception of faith in the early Church? Did Augustine's view differ from that of the earlier fathers? How did the distinction between a *fides informis* and a *fides formata* arise? How did Luther and Calvin differ as to the order of faith and repentance? Do the Lutherans and the Reformed agree as to the order of faith and regeneration? Why is it important to maintain the proper order? How did the distinction between the *actus* and the *habitus* of faith arise, and why is it important? Can the proposition, "I am saved," ever be the object of saving faith? What conception of faith is found in Schleiermacher and Ritschl? Why is it very appropriate that salvation should be contingent on faith? How does the excessive *activism* of Barth affect his doctrine of faith? What does he mean when he says that man is never a believer or a Christian, but always a sinner? How do you account for his denial that faith includes assurance?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.* IV, pp. 83-127; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 98-131; *ibid.*, *Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest* II, pp. 233-297; Vos, *Geref. Dogm.* IV., pp. 82-154; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* III, pp. 41-113; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* II, pp. 531-534; Dabney, *Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 600-612; McPherson, *Chr. Dogm.*, pp. 388-393; Schmid, *Doct. Theol. of the Ev. Luth. Ch.*, pp. 416-430; Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 232-241; Kaftan, *Dogm.*, pp. 656-681; Litton, *Introd. to Dogm. Theol.*, pp. 282-296; Pope, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 376-385; Pictet, *Theol.*, pp. 298-309; Inge, *Faith and Its Psychology*; Machen, *What is Faith?*; O'Brian, *The Nature and Effects of Faith*; Moehler, *Symbolism or Doctrinal Differences*; Bavinck, *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*; Berkhof, *The Assurance of Faith*; Wernecke, "Faith" in the New Testament; Warfield, *The Biblical Doctrine of Faith* (in *Biblical Doctrines*, VIII).

IX. Justification

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR JUSTIFICATION AND THEIR MEANING.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT TERM. The Hebrew term for “to justify” is *hitsdik*, which in the great majority of cases means “to declare judicially that one’s state is in harmony with the demands of the law, Ex. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23. The *piel tsiddek* occasionally has the same meaning, Jer. 3:11; Ezek. 16:50,51. The meaning of these words is therefore strictly forensic or legal. Since Roman Catholics, such representatives of the moral influence theory of the atonement as John Young of Edinburgh and Horace Bushnell, and also the Unitarians and modern liberal theologians, deny the legal meaning of the term “to justify,” and ascribe to it the moral sense of “to make just or righteous,” it becomes important to take careful notice of the considerations that may be urged in favor of the legal meaning. That this is the proper denotation of the word appears (a) from the terms placed in contrast with it, as, for instance “condemnation,” Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23; (b) from the correlative terms placed in juxtaposition with it and which often imply a process of judgment, Gen. 18:25; Ps. 143:2; (c) from the equivalent expressions that are sometimes used, Gen. 15:6; Ps. 32:1,2; and (d) from the fact that a passage like Prov. 17:15 would yield an impossible sense, if the word meant “to make just.” The meaning would then be: He who morally improves the life of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. There are a couple of passages, however, in which the word means more than simply “to declare righteous,” namely, Isa. 53:11; Dan. 12:3. But even in these cases the sense is not “to make good or holy,” but rather “to alter the condition so that man can be considered righteous.”

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS AND THEIR USE. Here we have:

a. *The verb dikairo-o.* This verb means in general “to declare a person to be just. Occasionally it refers to a personal declaration that one’s moral character is in conformity with the law, Matt. 12:37; Luke 7:29; Rom. 3:4. In the Epistles of Paul the soteriological meaning of the term is clearly in the foreground. It is “to declare forensically that the demands of the law as a condition of life are fully satisfied with regard to a person, Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1,9; 8:30-33; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 2:16; 3:11. In the case of this word, just as in that of *hitsdik*, the forensic meaning of the term is proved by the following facts: (a) in many instances it can bear no other sense, Rom. 3:20-28; 4:5-7; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 5:4; (b) it is placed in antithetic relation to “condemnation” in Rom. 8:33,34; (c) equivalent and interchangeable expressions convey a judicial or legal idea, John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 4:6,7; II Cor. 5:19; and (d) if it does not bear this meaning, there is no distinction between justification and sanctification.

b. *The word dikaios.* This word, connected with the verb just discussed, is peculiar in that it never expresses what a thing is in itself, but always what it is in relation to something else, to some standard outside of it, to which it ought to correspond. In that respect it differs from *agathos*. In classical Greek, for instance, *dikaos* is applied to a wagon, a horse, or something else to indicate that it is fit for its intended use. *Agathos* expresses the idea that a thing in itself answers to the ideal. In Scripture a man is called *dikaos* when, in the judgment of God, his relation to the law is what it ought to be, or when his life is such as is required by his judicial relation to God. This may include the idea that he is good, but only from a certain point of view, namely, that of his judicial relation to God.

c. *The noun dikaiosis, justification.* This is found in only two places in the New Testament, namely, Rom. 4:25; 5:18. It denotes the act

of God's declaring men free from guilt and acceptable to Him. The resulting state is denoted by the word *dikaiosune*.

3. *The resulting idea of justification.* Our word *justification* (from the Latin *justificare*, composed of *justus* and *facere*, and therefore meaning "to make righteous"), just as the Holland *rechtvaardigmaking*, is apt to give the impression that justification denotes a change that is brought about in man, which is not the case. In the use of the English word the danger is not so great, because the people in general do not understand its derivation, and in the Holland language the danger may be averted by employing the related words *rechtvaardigen* and *rechtvaardiging*. "To justify" in the Scriptural sense of the word, is to effect an objective relation, the state of righteousness, by a judicial sentence. This can be done in a twofold way: (a) by bringing into account the actual subjective condition of a person (to justify the just or the righteous), Jas. 2:21; or (b) by imputing to a person the righteousness of another, that is, by accounting him righteous though he is inwardly unrighteous. The latter is the usual sense of justification in the New Testament.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN HISTORY.

The doctrine of justification by faith was not always clearly understood. In fact, it did not find its classical expression until the days of the Reformation. We shall briefly consider:

1. THE DOCTRINE BEFORE THE REFORMATION. Some of the earliest Church Fathers already speak of justification by faith, but it is quite evident that they had no clear understanding of it and of its relation to faith. Moreover, they did not sharply distinguish between regeneration and justification. A rather common representation was that regeneration takes place in baptism and includes the forgiveness of sins. Even Augustine does not seem to

have had an accurate understanding of justification as a legal act, as distinguished from the moral process of sanctification, though it is quite evident from the whole tenor of his teachings and also from separate statements, that he regarded the grace of God in the redemption of sinners as free, sovereign, and efficacious, and in no way dependent on any merits of men. The confounding of justification and sanctification continued into the Middle Ages and gradually acquired a more positive and doctrinal aspect. According to the prevailing teachings of the Scholastics, justification includes two elements: man's sins are forgiven, and he is made just or righteous. There was a difference of opinion as to the logical order of these two elements, some reversing the order just indicated. This was also done by Thomas Aquinas, and his view became the prevalent one in the Roman Catholic Church. Grace is infused in man, whereby he is made just, and partly on the basis of this infused grace, his sins are pardoned. This was already an approach to the evil doctrine of merit, which was gradually developed in the Middle Ages in connection with the doctrine of justification. The idea found favor ever-increasingly that man is justified in part on the basis of his own good works. The confounding of justification and sanctification also led to divergent opinions on another point. Some of the Scholastics speak of justification as an instantaneous act of God, while others describe it as a process. In the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent we find the following in Chap. XVI, Canon IX: "If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining of the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema." And Canon XXIV speaks of an increase in justification and therefore conceives of it as a process: "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema."

2. THE DOCTRINE AFTER THE REFORMATION. The doctrine of justification was the great material principle of the Reformation. With respect to the nature of justification the Reformers corrected the error of confounding justification with sanctification by stressing its legal character and representing it as an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardons our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, but does not change us inwardly. As far as the ground of justification is concerned, they rejected the idea of Rome that this lies, at least in part, in the inherent righteousness of the regenerate and in good works, and substituted for it the doctrine that it is found only in the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. And in connection with the means of justification they emphasized the fact that man is justified freely by that faith which receives and rests in Christ only for salvation. Moreover, they rejected the doctrine of a progressive justification, and held that it was instantaneous and complete, and did not depend for its completion on some further satisfaction for sin. They were opposed by the Socinians, who held that sinners obtain pardon and acceptance with God, through His mercy, on the ground of their own repentance and reformation. The Arminians do not all agree on the subject, but in general it may be said that they limit the scope of justification, so as to include only the forgiveness of sins on the basis of the passive obedience of Christ, and to exclude the adoption of the sinner in favor by God or the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The sinner is accounted righteous only on the basis of his faith or his life of obedience. The Neonomians in England were in general agreement with them on this point. For Schleiermacher and Ritschl justification meant little more than the sinner's becoming conscious of his mistake in thinking that God was angry with him. And in modern liberal theology we again meet with the idea that God justifies the sinner by the moral improvement of his life. This conception of it is found, for instance, in Bushnell's *Vicarious Sacrifice* and in Macintosh's *Theology as an Empirical Science*.

C. THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JUSTIFICATION.
Justification is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the

basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner. It is unique in the application of the work of redemption in that it is a judicial act of God, a declaration respecting the sinner, and not an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. While it has respect to the sinner, it does not change his inner life. It does not affect his condition, but his state, and in that respect differs from all the other principal parts of the order of salvation. It involves the forgiveness of sins, and restoration to divine favor. The Arminian holds that it includes only the former, and not the latter; but the Bible clearly teaches that the fruit of justification is much more than pardon. They who are justified have “peace with God,” “assurance of salvation,” Rom. 5:1-10, and an “inheritance among them that are sanctified,” Acts 26:18. The following points of difference between justification and sanctification should be carefully noted:

1. Justification removes the guilt of sin and restores the sinner to all the filial rights involved in his state as a child of God, including an eternal inheritance. Sanctification removes the pollution of sin and renews the sinner ever-increasingly in conformity with the image of God.
2. Justification takes place outside of the sinner in the tribunal of God, and does not change his inner life, though the sentence is brought home to him subjectively. Sanctification, on the other hand, takes place in the inner life of man and gradually affects his whole being.
3. Justification takes place once for all. It is not repeated, neither is it a process; it is complete at once and for all time. There is no more or less in justification; man is either fully justified, or he is not justified at all. In distinction from it sanctification is a continuous process, which is never completed in this life.

4. While the meritorious cause of both lies in the merits of Christ, there is a difference in the efficient cause. Speaking economically, God the Father declares the sinner righteous, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies him.

D. THE ELEMENTS OF JUSTIFICATION.

We distinguish two elements in justification, the one negative, and the other positive.

1. THE NEGATIVE ELEMENT. There is first of all a negative element in justification, namely, the remission of sins on the ground of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This element is based more particularly, though not exclusively, on the passive obedience of the Saviour. Calvin and some of the older Reformed theologians occasionally speak as if this were the whole of justification. This is partly due to the Old Testament representation, in which this side of justification is decidedly in the foreground, Ps. 32:1; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34, and partly to their reaction against Rome, which did not do justice to the element of grace and free pardon. In opposition to Arminianism, however, Reformed theology has always maintained that justification is more than pardon. That the forgiveness of sins is an important element in justification is evident, not only from the Old, but also from the New Testament, as appears from such passages as Rom. 4:5-8; 5:18,19; Gal. 2:17.

The pardon granted in justification applies to all sins, past, present, and future, and thus involves the removal of all guilt and of every penalty. This follows from the fact that justification does not admit of repetition, and from such passages as Rom. 5:21; 8:1,32-34; Heb. 10:14; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22, which assure us that no one can lay anything to the charge of the justified man, that he is exempt from condemnation, and that he is constituted an heir of eternal life. It is also implied in the answer to the 60th question of our Heidelberg Catechism. This conception of justification, though eminently

Scriptural, is not devoid of difficulty. Believers continue to sin after they are justified, Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8, and, as Scripture examples clearly show, frequently fall into grievous sins. Hence it is no wonder that Barth likes to stress the fact that the justified man remains a sinner, though a justified sinner. Christ taught His disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 6:12, and the Bible saints are often pleading for pardon and obtaining it, Ps. 32:5; 51:1-4; 130:3,4. Consequently it is not surprising that some felt constrained to speak of a repeated justification. The Church of Rome infers from the data to which we called attention that believers must in some way atone for sins committed after baptism, and therefore also believes in an increasing justification. Antinomians, on the other hand, desiring to honour the unlimited pardoning grace of God, maintain that the sins of believers are not accounted as such to the new man but only to the old, and that it is quite unnecessary for them to pray for the forgiveness of sins. For fear of this Antinomian position even some Reformed theologians had scruples about teaching that the future sins of believers are also pardoned in justification, and spoke of a repeated and even daily justification.[Cf. Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* I, pp. 876 ff.] The usual position of Reformed theology, however, is that in justification God indeed removes the guilt, but not the culpability of sin, that is, He removes the sinner's just amenability to punishment, but not the inherent guiltiness of whatever sins he may continue to perform. The latter remains and therefore always produces in believers a feeling of guilt, of separation from God, of sorrow, of repentance, and so on. Hence they feel the need of confessing their sins, even the sins of their youth, Ps. 25:7: 51:5-9. The believer who is really conscious of his sin feels within him an urge to confess it and to seek the comforting assurance of forgiveness. Moreover, such confession and prayer is not only a subjectively felt need, but also an objective necessity. Justification is essentially an objective declaration respecting the sinner in the tribunal of God, but it is not merely that; it is also an *actus transiens*, passing into the consciousness of the believer. The divine sentence of acquittal is brought home to the sinner and awakens the

joyous consciousness of the forgiveness of sins and of favor with God. Now this consciousness of pardon and of a renewed filial relationship is often disturbed and obscured by sin, and is again quickened and strengthened by confession and prayer, and by a renewed exercise of faith.

2. THE POSITIVE ELEMENT. There is also a positive element in justification which is based more particularly on the active obedience of Christ. Naturally they who, like Piscator and the Arminians, deny the imputation of the active obedience of Christ to the sinner, thereby also deny the positive element in justification. According to them justification leaves man without any claim on life eternal, simply places him in the position of Adam before the fall, though according to the Arminians under a different law, the law of evangelical obedience, and leaves it to man to merit acceptance with God and eternal life by faith and obedience. But it is quite evident from Scripture that justification is more than mere pardon. Unto Joshua, the high priest, who stood, as the representative of Israel, with filthy garments before the Lord, Jehovah said: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee (negative element), and I will clothe thee with rich apparel" (positive element), Zech. 3:4. According to Acts 26:18 we obtain by faith "remission of sins *and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.*" Romans 5:1,2 teaches us that justification by faith brings not only peace with God, *but also access to God and joy in the hope of glory.* And according to Gal. 4:5 Christ was born under the law also "*that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" In this positive element two parts may be distinguished:

a. *The adoption of children.* Believers are first of all children of God by adoption. This implies, of course, that they are not children of God by nature, as modern liberals would have us believe, for one cannot well adopt his own children. This adoption is a legal act, whereby God places the sinner in the status of a child, but does not change him inwardly any more than parents by the mere act of adoption change the inner life of an adopted child. The change that

is effected concerns the relation in which man stands to God. By virtue of their adoption believers are as it were initiated into the very family of God, come under the law of filial obedience, and at the same time become entitled to all the privileges of sonship. The sonship by adoption should be carefully distinguished from the moral sonship of believers, their sonship by regeneration and sanctification. They are not only adopted to be children of God, but are also born of God. Naturally these two cannot be separated. They are mentioned together in John 1:12; Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 3:26,27; 4:5,6. In Rom. 8:15 the term *huiiothesia* (from *huios* and *tithenai*) is used, which literally means “placing as a son,” and in classical Greek is always employed to denote an objective placing in the status of a child. The following verse contains the word *tekna* (from *tikto*, “to beget”), which designates believers as those who are begotten of God. In John 1:12 the idea of adoption is expressed by the words, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right (*exousian edoken*) to become children of God.” The Greek expression here used means “to give legal right.” Immediately thereafter, in the 13th verse, the writer speaks of ethical sonship by regeneration. The connection between the two is clearly brought out in Gal. 4:5,6 . . . “that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons (by adoption), God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” That Spirit regenerates and sanctifies us and prompts us to address God full of confidence as Father.

b. *The right to eternal life.* This element is virtually included in the preceding one. When sinners are adopted to be children of God, they are invested with all the legal filial rights, and become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. This means first of all that they become heirs of all the blessings of salvation in the present life, the most fundamental of which is described in the words, “the promise of the Spirit,” that is, the promised blessing in the form of the Spirit, Gal. 3:14; and in the slightly different phrase, “the Spirit of His Son,” Gal. 4:6. And in and with the Spirit they receive all the gifts of Christ. But this is not all; their inheritance also includes the eternal blessings of the future life. The glory of which Paul speaks

in Rom. 8:17 follows after the sufferings of the present time. According to Rom. 8:23 the redemption of the body, which is there called “the adoption,” also belongs to the future inheritance. And in the *ordo salutis* of Rom. 8:29,30 glorification connects up immediately with justification. Being justified by faith, believers are heirs of life eternal.

E. THE SPHERE IN WHICH JUSTIFICATION OCCURS.

The question as to the sphere in which justification occurs, must be answered with discrimination. It is customary to distinguish between an *active* and a *passive*, also called an *objective* and a *subjective*, justification, each having its own sphere.

1. ACTIVE OR OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION. This is justification in the most fundamental sense of the word. It is basic to what is called subjective justification, and consists in a declaration which God makes respecting the sinner, and this declaration is made in the tribunal of God. This declaration is not a declaration in which God simply acquits the sinner, without taking any account of the claims of justice, but is rather a divine declaration that, in the case of the sinner under consideration, the demands of the law are met. The sinner is declared righteous in view of the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. In this transaction God appears, not as an absolute Sovereign who simply sets the law aside, but as a righteous Judge, who acknowledges the infinite merits of Christ as a sufficient basis for justification, and as a gracious Father, who freely forgives and accepts the sinner. This active justification logically precedes faith and passive justification. *We believe* the forgiveness of sins.

2. PASSIVE OR SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION. Passive or subjective justification takes place in the heart or conscience of the sinner. A purely objective justification that is not brought home to

the sinner would not answer the purpose. The granting of a pardon would mean nothing to a prisoner, unless the glad tidings were communicated to him and the doors of the prison were opened. Moreover, it is exactly at this point that the sinner learns to understand better than anywhere else that salvation is of free grace. When the Bible speaks of justification, it usually refers to what is known as passive justification. It should be borne in mind, however, that the two cannot be separated. The one is based on the other. The distinction is simply made to facilitate the proper understanding of the act of justification. Logically, passive justification follows faith; we are justified by faith.

F. THE TIME OF JUSTIFICATION.

Some theologians separate active and passive justification temporally. The active justification is then said to have taken place in eternity or in the resurrection of Christ, while passive justification takes place by faith and therefore, it is said, follows the other in a temporal sense. We shall consider successively justification from eternity, justification in the resurrection of Christ, and justification by faith.

1. JUSTIFICATION FROM ETERNITY. The Antinomians held that the justification of the sinner took place in eternity, or in the resurrection of Christ. They either confounded it with the eternal decree of election, or with the objective justification of Christ when He was raised from the dead. They did not properly distinguish between the divine purpose in eternity and its execution in time, nor between the work of Christ in procuring, and that of the Holy Spirit in applying the blessings of redemption. According to this position we are justified even before we believe, though we are unconscious of it, and faith simply conveys to us the declaration of this fact. Moreover, the fact that our sins were imputed to Christ made Him personally a sinner, and the imputation of His righteousness to us makes us personally righteous, so that God can

see no sin in believers at all. Some Reformed theologians also speak of justification from eternity, but at the same time refuse to subscribe to the Antinomian construction of this doctrine. The grounds on which they believe in justification from eternity deserve brief consideration.

a. *Grounds for the doctrine of justification from eternity.*

(1) Scripture speaks of a grace or mercy of God which is from everlasting, Ps. 25:6; 103:17. Now all grace or mercy that is from eternity must have as its judicial or legal basis a justification that is from eternity. But in answer to this it may be said that there are eternal mercies and lovingkindnesses of God which are not based on any justification of the sinner, as, for instance, His plan of redemption, the gift of His Son, and the willing suretyship of Christ in the *pactum salutis*.

(2) In the *pactum salutis* the guilt of the sins of the elect was transferred to Christ, and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them. This means that the burden of sin was lifted from their shoulders and that they were justified. Now there is no doubt about it that there was a certain imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner in the counsel of redemption, but not all imputation can be called justification in the Scriptural sense of the term. We must distinguish between what was merely ideal in the counsel of God and what is realized in the course of history.

(3) The sinner receives the initial grace of regeneration on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Consequently, the merits of Christ must have been imputed to him before his regeneration. But while this consideration leads to the conclusion that justification logically precedes regeneration, it does not prove the priority of justification in a temporal sense. The sinner can receive the grace of regeneration on the basis of a justification, ideally existing in the counsel of God and certain to be realized in the life of the sinner.

(4) Children also need justification, in order to be saved, and yet it is quite impossible that they should experience justification by faith. But though it is perfectly true that children, who have not yet come to maturity, cannot experience passive justification, they can be actively justified in the tribunal of God and thus be in possession of that which is absolutely essential.

(5) Justification is an immanent act of God, and as such must be from eternity. It is hardly correct, however, to speak of justification as an *actus immanens* in God; it is rather an *actus transiens*, just as creation, incarnation, and so on. The advocates of justification from eternity feel the weight of this consideration, and therefore hasten to give us the assurance that they do not mean to teach that the elect are justified from eternity *actualiter*, but only in the intention of God, in the divine decree. This leads us back to the usual distinction between the counsel of God and its execution. If this justification in the intention of God warrants our speaking of a justification from eternity, then there is absolutely no reason why we should not speak of a creation from eternity as well.

b. *Objections against the doctrine of justification from eternity.*

(1) The Bible teaches uniformly that justification takes place by faith or out of faith. This, of course, applies to passive or subjective justification, which, however, cannot be separated temporally from active or objective justification except in the case of children. But if justification takes place by faith, it certainly does not precede faith in a temporal sense. Now it is true that the advocates of a justification from eternity also speak of a justification by faith. But in their representation this can only mean that man by faith becomes conscious of what God has done in eternity.

(2) In Rom. 8:29,30, where we find some of the *scalae* of the *ordo salutis*, justification stands between two acts of God in time, namely, calling and glorification, which begins in time but is completed in a future eternity. And these three together are the

result of two others which are explicitly indicated as eternal. Dr. Kuyper is not warranted in saying that Rom. 8:30 refers to what took place with the regenerated before they were born, as even Dr. De Moor, who also believes in a justification from eternity, is quite willing to admit.[Cf. his *De Rechtvaardigmaking Van Eeuwigheid*, p. 20.]

(3) In teaching justification from eternity, the decree of God respecting the justification of the sinner, which is an *actus immanens*, is identified with justification itself, which is an *actus transiens*. This only leads to confusion. What took place in the *pactum salutis* cannot be identified with what results from it. All imputation is not yet justification. Justification is one of the fruits of Christ's redemptive work, applied to believers by the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit did not and could not apply this or any other fruit of the work of Christ from eternity.

2. JUSTIFICATION IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

The idea that sinners are in some sense of the word justified in the resurrection of Christ was stressed by some Antinomians, is taught by those Reformed theologians who believe in a justification from eternity, and is also held by some other Reformed scholars. This view is based on the following grounds:

a. By His atoning work Christ satisfied all the demands of the law for His people. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the Father publicly declared that all the requirements of the law were met for all the elect and thereby justified them. But here too careful distinction is required. Even though it be true that there was an objective justification of Christ and of the whole body of Christ in His resurrection, this should not be confounded with the justification of the sinner of which Scripture speaks. It is not true that, when Christ rendered full satisfaction to the Father for all His people, their guilt naturally terminated. A penal debt is not like a pecuniary debt in this respect. Even after the payment of a ransom, the removal of guilt may depend on certain conditions, and does not

follow as a matter of course. The elect are not personally justified in the Scriptural sense until they accept Christ by faith and thus appropriate His merits.

b. In Rom. 4:25 we read that Christ was “raised up for (*dia*, causal, on account of) our justification,” that is, to effect our justification. Now it is undoubtedly true that *dia* with the accusative is causal here. At the same time it need not be retrospective, but can also be prospective and therefore mean “with a view to our justification,” which is equivalent to saying, “in order that we may be justified.” The retrospective interpretation would be in conflict with the immediately following context, which clearly shows (1) that Paul is not thinking of the objective justification of the whole body of Christ, but of the personal justification of sinners; and (2) that he conceives of this as taking place through faith.

c. In II Cor. 5:19 we read: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses.” From this passage the inference is drawn that the objective reconciliation of the world in Christ involves the non-imputation of sin to the sinner. But this interpretation is not correct. The evident meaning of the apostle is: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, as appears from the fact that He does not impute to men their sins, and that He has entrusted to His servants the word of reconciliation. Notice that *me logizomenos* (present tense) refers to what is constantly going on. This cannot be conceived as a part of the objective reconciliation, for then the following clause, “and having committed to us the word of reconciliation,” would also have to be so interpreted, and this is quite impossible.

In connection with this matter it may be said that we can speak of a justification of the body of Christ as a whole in His resurrection, but this is purely objective and should not be confounded with the personal justification of the sinner.

3. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

a. *The relation of faith to justification.* Scripture says that we are justified *dia pisteos, ek pisteos, or pistei* (dative), Rom. 3:25,28,30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9. The preposition *dia* stresses the fact that faith is the instrument by which we appropriate Christ and His righteousness. The preposition *ek* indicates that faith logically precedes our personal justification, so that this, as it were, originates in faith. The dative is used in an instrumental sense. Scripture never says that we are justified *dia ten pistin*, on account of faith. This means that faith is never represented as the ground of our justification. If this were the case, faith would have to be regarded as a meritorious work of man. And this would be the introduction of the doctrine of justification by works, which the apostle opposes consistently, Rom. 3:21,27,28; 4:3,4; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:11. We are told indeed that Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness, Rom. 4:3,9,22; Gal. 3:6, but in view of the whole argument this surely cannot mean that in his case faith itself as a work took the place of the righteousness of God in Christ. The apostle does not leave it doubtful that, strictly speaking, only the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is the ground of our justification. But faith is so thoroughly receptive in the appropriation of the merits of Christ, that it can be put figuratively for the merits of Christ which it receives. "Faith" then is equivalent to the contents of faith, that is, to the merits or the righteousness of Christ.

It is often said, however, that the teachings of James conflict with those of Paul on this point, and clearly support the doctrine of justification by works in Jas. 2:14-26. Various attempts have been made to harmonize the two. Some proceed on the assumption that both Paul and James speak of the justification of the sinner, but that James stresses the fact that a faith which does not manifest itself in good works is no true faith, and therefore is not a faith that justifies. This is undoubtedly true. The difference between the representations of Paul and James is unquestionably due partly to the nature of the adversaries with which they had to deal. Paul had to contend with legalists who sought to base their justification, at

least in part, on the works of the law. James, on the other hand, joined issue with Antinomians, who claimed to have faith, but whose faith was merely an intellectual assent to the truth (2:19), and who denied the necessity of good works. Therefore he stresses the fact that faith without works is a dead faith, and consequently not at all a faith that justifies. The faith that justifies is a faith that is fruitful in good works. But it may be objected that this does not explain the whole difficulty, since James explicitly says in verse 24 that a man is justified by works and not only by faith, and illustrates this by the example of Abraham, who was “justified by works in that he offered up Isaac” (verse 21). “Thou seest,” says he in verse 24, “that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.” It is quite evident, however, that in this case the writer is not speaking of the justification of the sinner, for Abraham the sinner was justified long before he offered up Isaac (cf. Gen. 15), but of a further justification of the believing Abraham. True faith will manifest itself in good works, and these works will testify before men of the righteousness (that is, the righteousness of life) of him that possesses such a faith. The justification of the just by works confirms the justification by faith. If James actually meant to say in this section of his letter that Abraham and Rahab were justified with the *justificatio peccatoris*, on the basis of their good works, he would not only be in conflict with Paul, but would also be self-contradictory, for he explicitly says that Abraham was justified by faith.

b. *Theological terms to express the relation of faith to justification.* There are especially three terms that come into consideration here.

(1) *Instrumental cause.* This name was very generally used at first, but afterwards met with considerable opposition. The question was raised, whether it was God’s instrument or man’s. And it was said: It cannot be God’s, since the faith referred to is not God’s faith; neither can it be man’s, for justification is not a deed of man, but of God. We should bear in mind, however, (a) that according to the plain teaching of the Bible we are justified by faith, *dia piteos*, and

that this *dia* can only be understood in an instrumental sense, Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:8; (b) that the Bible explicitly says that *God* justifies the sinner by faith, and therefore represents faith as God's instrument, Rom. 3:30; and (c) that faith is also represented as the instrument of man, as the means by which he receives justification, Gal. 2:16. Faith can be regarded as the instrument of God in a twofold sense. It is a gift of God wrought in the sinner unto justification. Moreover, by working faith in the sinner, God carries the declaration of pardon into his heart or conscience. But faith is also an instrument of man by which he appropriates Christ and all His precious gifts, Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16. This is also the representation of the matter which we find in the *Belgic Confession*, [Art. XXII.] and in the *Heidelberg Catechism*. [Questions 60 and 61.] By faith we embrace Christ and remain in contact with Him who is our righteousness. The name "instrumental cause" is regularly used in Protestant Confessions. Yet some Reformed theologians prefer to avoid it, in order to guard themselves against the danger of giving the impression that justification is in any way dependent on faith as a work of man.

(2) *Appropriating organ*. This name expresses the idea that by faith the sinner appropriates the righteousness of Christ and establishes a conscious union between himself and Christ. The merits of Christ constitute the *dikaioma*, the legal basis on which the formal declaration of God in justification rests. By faith the sinner appropriates the righteousness of the Mediator already imputed to him ideally in the *pactum salutis*; and on the basis of this he is now formally justified before God. Faith justifies in so far as it takes possession of Christ. The name "appropriating organ" includes the instrumental idea, and is therefore perfectly in harmony with the statements found in our confessional standards. It has an advantage over the more common name in that it excludes the idea that faith is in any sense the basis for justification. It can be called an appropriating organ in a twofold sense: (a) It is the organ by which we lay hold on and appropriate the merits of Christ, and accept these as the meritorious ground of our justification. As such it

logically precedes justification. (b) It is also the organ by which we consciously apprehend our justification and obtain possession of subjective justification. In this sense it logically follows justification. On the whole this name deserves preference, though it should be borne in mind that, strictly speaking, faith is the organ by which we appropriate the righteousness of Christ as the ground of our justification, rather than the organ by which we appropriate justification itself.

(3) *Conditio sine qua non*. This name, suggested by some Reformed theologians, did not meet with great favor. It expresses the idea, which is perfectly true in itself, that man is not justified apart from faith, and that faith is an indispensable condition of justification. The name expresses nothing positive, and is, moreover, liable to misunderstanding.

G. THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

One of the most important points of controversy between the Church of Rome and the Reformers, and between Reformed theology and the Arminians, concerned the ground of justification. With respect to this the Reformers taught:

1. Negatively, that this cannot be found in any virtue of man, nor in his good works. This position must also be maintained at present over against Rome and the Pelagianizing tendencies of various Churches. Rome teaches that the sinner is justified on the basis of the inherent righteousness that has been infused into his heart, and which, in turn, is the fruit of the co-operation of the human will with prevenient grace. This applies to what is called the first justification; in all following justification the good works of man come into consideration as the formal cause or ground of justification. It is impossible, however, that the inherent righteousness of the regenerate man and his good works should constitute the ground of his justification, for (a) this righteousness

is and remains during this life a very imperfect righteousness; (b) it is itself already the fruit of the righteousness of Christ and of the grace of God; and (c) even the best works of believers are polluted by sin. Moreover, Scripture teaches us very clearly that man is justified freely by the grace of God, Rom. 3:24, and that he cannot possibly be justified by the works of the law, Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11.

2. Positively, that the ground of justification can be found only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the sinner in justification. This is plainly taught in several passages of Scripture, such as Rom. 3:24; 5:9,19; 8:1; 10:4; I Cor. 1:30; 6:11; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9. In the passive obedience of Christ, who became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) we find the ground for the forgiveness of sins; and in His active obedience, by which He merited all the gifts of grace, including eternal life, the ground for the adoption of children, by which sinners are constituted heirs of life eternal. The Arminian goes contrary to Scripture when he maintains that we are accepted in favor by God only on the ground of our faith or evangelical obedience.

H. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

Modern liberal theology, with its rationalizing tendencies, raises several objections to the doctrine of justification as such, which deserve brief consideration.

1. Some, who still believe in salvation by grace, ostensibly object to justification in the interest of the recognition of the grace of God. Justification, it is said, is a legal transaction and as such excludes grace, while the Bible clearly teaches that the sinner is saved by grace. But it can easily be shown that justification with all its antecedents and consequents is a gracious work of God. The substitute allowed for guilty sinners, the vicarious sufferings and

obedience of Christ, the imputation of His righteousness to unworthy transgressors, and God's dealing with believers as righteous, — it is all free grace from start to finish.

2. Justification is sometimes called an impious procedure, because it declares sinners to be righteous contrary to fact. But this objection does not hold, because the divine declaration is not to the effect that these sinners are righteous in themselves, but that they are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness wrought by Christ, is freely imputed to them. It is not the personal subjective righteousness of Christ, but His vicarious covenant righteousness, that is imputed to those who are in themselves unrighteous, and all to the glory of God.

3. It is often said this doctrine is ethically subversive, because it leads to licentiousness. But there is no truth in this whatsoever, as even the lives of the justified clearly show. In justification the sure foundation is laid for that vital spiritual union with Christ which secures our sanctification. It really leads right on to the only conditions under which we can be truly holy in principle. The man who is justified also receives the spirit of sanctification, and is the only one who can abound in good works which will glorify God.

I. DIVERGENT VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION.

1. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW. The Roman Catholic view confounds justification and sanctification. It includes the following elements in justification (a) the expulsion of indwelling sin; (b) the positive infusion of divine grace; and (c) the forgiveness of sins. The sinner is prepared for justification by prevenient grace, without any merits on his part. This prevenient grace leads the sinner to a *fides informis*, to conviction of sin, to repentance, to a confident reliance on the grace of God in Christ, to the beginnings of a new life, and to a desire for baptism. Justification really consists in the infusion of

new virtues after the pollution of sin has been removed in baptism. After the expulsion of indwelling sin, the forgiveness of sin or the removal of the guilt of sin necessarily follows. And after that the Christian advances from virtue to virtue, is able to perform meritorious works, and receives as a reward a greater measure of grace and a more perfect justification. The grace of justification can be lost, but can also be restored by the sacrament of penance.

2. THE VIEW OF PISCATOR. Piscator taught that only the passive obedience of Christ is imputed to the sinner in justification, unto the forgiveness of sins; and that His active obedience could not possibly be imputed to him, unto the adoption of children and an eternal inheritance, because the man Christ Jesus owed this to God for Himself. Moreover, if Christ had fulfilled the law for us, we could no more be held responsible for the keeping of the law. Piscator regarded the bearing of the penalty of sin and the keeping of the law as alternatives, of which the one excludes the other. He left the door open for regarding the sinner's own personal obedience as the only ground of his future hope. This view is very much like that of the Arminians, and is quite in line with the doctrine of Anselm in the Middle Ages.

3. THE VIEW OF OSIANDER. Osiander revealed a tendency to revive in the Lutheran Church the essentials of the Roman Catholic conception of justification, though with a characteristic difference. He asserted that justification does not consist in the imputation of the vicarious righteousness of Christ to the sinner, but in the implanting of a new principle of life. According to him the righteousness by which we are justified is the eternal righteousness of God the Father, which is imparted to or infused into us by His Son Jesus Christ.

4. THE ARMINIAN VIEW. The Arminians hold that Christ did not render strict satisfaction to the justice of God, but yet offered a real propitiation for sin, which was graciously accepted and acted on as satisfactory by God in pardoning sin and thus justifying the

sinner. While this only squares past accounts, God also makes provision for the future. He just as graciously imputes the believer's faith to him for righteousness, that faith, namely, as including the entire religious life of the believer, — his evangelical obedience. On this view faith is no more the mere instrument of the positive element of justification, but the graciously admitted ground on which it rests. Justification, then, is not a judicial but a sovereign act of God.

5. THE BARTHIAN VIEW. While Barth does speak of justification as a momentary act, yet he does not regard it as an act accomplished once for all, and which is then followed by sanctification. According to him justification and sanctification go hand in hand all along the line. Pauck says that according to Barth justification is not a growth or an ethical development; it occurs ever anew, whenever man has reached the point of complete despair as to the beliefs and values upon which he has built his life. Thurneysen also rejects the view that justification takes place once for all, calls it the view of Pietism, and claims that it is fatal to the doctrine of the Reformation.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What does the verb *dikaio-o* mean in classical Greek? Is justification a creative or a declarative act? Is it possible to think of justification with respect to past sins in any other sense than that of a judicial acquittal? Should justification be thought of exclusively as something objective and external to man? What is meant in theology by the *formal* cause of justification? How do the Romanists and Protestants differ on this point? Is the justification of the Roman Catholics by the *fides formata* really a justification by faith, or a justification by love under the guise of faith? What is the Antinomian doctrine of justification from eternity? Is the distinction made by Buchanan and Cunningham between active and passive justification as being actual and declarative justification correct or not? Can we say that in declarative justification (passive justification) God simply declares the sinner to be what he is? What becomes of the doctrine

of justification in Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and modern liberal theology?

LITERATURE: Bavinck, *Geref. Dogm.*, IV, pp. 182-245; Kuyper, *Dict. Dogm., De Salute*, pp. 45-69; *ibid.*, *Het Werk van den Heiligen Geest* II, pp. 204-232; Comrie, *Brief over de Rechtvaardigmaking*; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* III, pp. 114-212; Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.* II, pp. 538-552; Dick, *Theology, Lectures* LXXI-LXXIII; Dabney, *Syst and Polem. Theol.*, pp. 618-650; Mastricht, *Godgeleerdheit* VI. 6 and 7; Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*; Owen, *On Justification*; Litton, *Introd. to Dogm. Theol.*, pp. 259-313; Girardeau, *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, pp. 413-566; Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.* II, pp. 606-672; Vos, *Geref. Dogm. IV.*, pp. 154-210; Schmid, *Doct. Theol. of the Ev. Luth. Church*, pp. 430-448; Valentine, *Chr. Theol.* II, pp. 214-241; Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, pp. 849-868; Dorner, *Syst. of Chr. Doct.* IV, pp. 194-238; Watson, *Theological Institutes*, II, pp. 406-475; De Moor, *Rechtvaardigmaking van Eeuwigheid*.

X. Sanctification

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR SANCTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT TERMS. The Old Testament word for 'to sanctify' is *qadash*, a verb that is used in the *niphal*, *piel*, *hiphil*, and *hithpa'el* species. The corresponding noun is *qodesh*, while the adjective is *qadosh*. The verbal forms are derived from the nominal and adjectival forms. The original meaning of these words is uncertain. Some are of the opinion that the word *qadash* is related to *chadash*, meaning 'to shine.' This would be in harmony with the qualitative aspect of the Biblical idea of holiness, namely, that of purity. Others, with a greater degree of probability, derive the word from the root *qad*, meaning 'to cut.' This would make the idea of separation the original idea. The word would then point to aloofness, separateness, or majesty. Though this meaning of the words 'sanctification' and 'holiness' may seem unusual to us, it is in all probability the fundamental idea expressed by them. Says Girdlestone: "The terms 'sanctification' and 'holiness' are now used so frequently to represent moral and spiritual qualities, that they hardly convey to the reader the idea of *position or relationship* as existing between God and some person or thing consecrated to Him; yet this appears to be the real meaning of the word." [*Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 283.] Similarly, Cremer-Koegel calls attention to the fact that the idea of separation is fundamental to that of holiness. "Heiligkeit ist ein verhaeltnisbegriff." At the same time it is admitted that the two ideas of holiness and separation do not merge, are not absorbed in each other, but that the former in a measure serves to qualify the latter. [*Biblisch-Theologisches Woerterbuch* (10th ed.) p. 41.]

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS.

a. *The verb hagiozo and its various meanings.* The verb *hagiozo* is a derivative of *hagios*, which like the Hebrew *qadosh* expresses primarily the idea of separation. It is used in several different senses, however, in the New Testament. We may distinguish the following: (1) It is used in a mental sense of persons or things, Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; I Pet. 3:15. In such cases it means “to regard an object as holy,” “to ascribe holiness to it,” or “to acknowledge its holiness by word or deed.” (2) It is also employed occasionally in a ritual sense, that is, in the sense of “separating from ordinary for sacred purposes,” or of “setting aside for a certain office,” Matt. 23:17,19; John 10:36; II Tim. 2:21. (3) Again it is used to denote that operation of God by which He, especially through His Spirit, works in man the subjective quality of holiness, John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 26:18; I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 5:23. (4) Finally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews it seems to be used in an expiatory sense, and also in the related sense of the Pauline *dikaio-o*, Heb. 9:13; 10:10,29; 13:12.[Cf. Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 220; Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles*, p. 214.]

b. *The adjectives expressive of the idea of holiness.* (1) *Hieros*. The word that is used least and that is also the least expressive, is the word *hieros*. It is found only in I Cor. 9:13; II Tim. 3:15, and then not of persons but of things. It does not express moral excellence, but is expressive of the inviolable character of the thing referred to, which springs from the relation in which it stands to God. It is best translated by the English word “sacred.” (2) *Hosios*. The word *hosios* is of more frequent occurrence. It is found in Acts 2:27; 13:34,35; I Tim. 2:8; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 7:26; Rev. 15:4; 16:5, and is applied not only to things, but also to God and to Christ. It describes a person or thing as free from defilement or wickedness, or more actively (of persons) as religiously fulfilling every moral obligation. (3) *Hagnos*. The word *hagnos* occurs in II Cor. 7:11; 11:2; Phil. 4:8; I Tim. 5:22; Jas. 3:17; I Pet. 3:2; I John 3:3. The fundamental idea of the word seems to be that of freedom from impurity and defilement in an ethical sense. (4) *Hagios*. The really characteristic word of the New Testament, however, is *hagios*. Its primary meaning is that of

separation in consecration and devotion to the service of God. With this is connected the idea that what is set aside from the world for God, should also separate itself from the world's defilement and share in God's purity. This explains the fact that *hagios* speedily acquired an ethical signification. The word does not always have the same meaning in the New Testament. (a) It is used to designate an external official relation, a being set aside from ordinary purposes for the service of God, as for instance, when we read of "holy prophets," Luke 1:70, "holy apostles," Eph. 3:5, and "holy men of God" II Pet. 1:21. (b) More often, however, it is employed in an ethical sense to describe the quality that is necessary to stand in close relation to God and to serve Him acceptably, Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; I Pet. 1:15,16. It should be borne in mind that in treating of sanctification we use the word primarily in the latter sense. When we speak of holiness in connection with sanctification, we have in mind both an external relation and an inner subjective quality.

c. *The nouns denoting sanctification and holiness.* The New Testament word for sanctification is *hagiasmos*. It occurs ten times, namely, in Rom. 6:19, 22; I Cor. 1:30; I Thess. 4:3,4,7; II Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14; I Pet. 1:2. While it denotes ethical purification, it includes the idea of separation, namely, "the separation of the spirit from all that is impure and polluting, and a renunciation of the sins towards which the desires of the flesh and of the mind lead us." While *hagiasmos* denotes the work of sanctification, there are two other words that describe the result of the process, namely, *hagiotes* and *hagiosune*. The former is found in I Cor. 1:30 and Heb. 12:10; and the latter in Rom. 1:4; II Cor. 7:1, and I Thess. 3:13. These passages show that the quality of holiness or freedom from pollution and impurity is essential to God, was exhibited by Jesus Christ, and is imparted to the Christian.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN HISTORY.

1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION. In the historical unfolding of the doctrine of sanctification, the Church concerned itself primarily with three problems: (a) the relation of the grace of God in sanctification to faith; (b) the relation of sanctification to justification; and (c) the degree of sanctification in this present life. The writings of the early Church Fathers contain very little respecting the doctrine of sanctification. A strain of moralism is quite apparent in that man was taught to depend for salvation on faith and good works. Sins committed before baptism were washed away in baptism, but for those after baptism man must provide by penance and good works. He must lead a life of virtue and thus merit the approval of the Lord. "Such dualism," says Scott in his *The Nicene Theology*, [p. 200.] "left the domain of sanctification only indirectly related to the redemption of Christ; and this was the field in which grew up, naturally, defective conceptions of sin, legalism, Sacramentarianism, priestcraft, and all the excesses of monkish devotion." Asceticism came to be regarded as of the greatest importance. There was also a tendency to confound justification and sanctification. Augustine was the first one to develop rather definite ideas of sanctification, and his views had a determining influence on the Church of the Middle Ages. He did not clearly distinguish between justification and sanctification, but conceived of the latter as included in the former. Since he believed in the total corruption of human nature by the fall, he thought of sanctification as a new supernatural impartation of divine life, a new infused energy, operating exclusively within the confines of the Church and through the sacraments. While he did not lose sight of the importance of personal love to Christ as a constituent element in sanctification, he manifested a tendency to take a metaphysical view of the grace of God in sanctification, — to regard it as a deposit of God in man. He did not sufficiently stress the necessity of a constant preoccupation of faith with the redeeming Christ, as the most important factor in the transformation of the Christian's life. The tendencies apparent in the teachings of Augustine came to fruition in the theology of the Middle Ages, which is found in its most developed form in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Justification and sanctification are not

clearly distinguished, but the former is made to include the infusion of divine grace, as something substantial, into the human soul. This grace is a sort of *donum superadditum*, by which the soul is lifted to a new level or a higher order of being, and is enabled to achieve its heavenly destiny of knowing, possessing, and enjoying God. The grace is derived from the inexhaustible treasury of the merits of Christ and is imparted to believers by the sacraments. Looked at from the divine point of view, this sanctifying grace within the soul secures the remission of original sin, imparts a permanent habit of inherent righteousness, and carries within itself the potency of further development, and even of perfection. Out of it the new life develops with all its virtues. Its good work can be neutralized or destroyed by mortal sins; but the guilt contracted after baptism can be removed by the eucharist in the case of venial sins, and by the sacrament of penance in the case of mortal sins. Considered from the human point of view, the supernatural works of faith working through love have merit before God, and secure an increase of grace. Such works are impossible, however, without the continuous operation of the grace of God. The result of the whole process was known as justification rather than as sanctification; it consisted in making man just before God. These ideas are embodied in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent.

2. AFTER THE REFORMATION. The Reformers in speaking of sanctification emphasized the antithesis of sin and redemption rather than that of nature and supernature. They made a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, regarding the former as a legal act of divine grace, affecting the judicial status of man, and the latter, as a moral or re-creative work, changing the inner nature of man. But while they made a careful distinction between the two, they also stressed their inseparable connection. While deeply convinced that man is justified by faith alone, they also understood that the faith which justifies is not alone. Justification is at once followed by sanctification, since God sends out the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of His own as soon as they are justified, and that Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification. They did

not regard the grace of sanctification as a supernatural essence infused in man through the sacraments, but as a supernatural and gracious work of the Holy Spirit, primarily through the Word and secondarily through the sacraments, by which He delivers us more and more from the power of sin and enables us to do good works. Though in no way confounding justification and sanctification, they felt the necessity of preserving the closest possible connection between the former, in which the free and forgiving grace of God is strongly emphasized, and the latter, which calls for the co-operation of man, in order to avoid the danger of work-righteousness. In Pietism and Methodism great emphasis was placed on constant fellowship with Christ as the great means of sanctification. By exalting sanctification at the expense of justification, they did not always avoid the danger of self-righteousness. Wesley did not merely distinguish justification and sanctification, but virtually separated them, and spoke of entire sanctification as a second gift of grace, following the first, of justification by faith, after a shorter or longer period. While he also spoke of sanctification as a process, he yet held that the believer should pray and look for full sanctification at once by a separate act of God. Under the influence of Rationalism and of the moralism of Kant sanctification ceased to be regarded as a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of sinners, and was brought down to the level of a mere moral improvement by the natural powers of man. For Schleiermacher it was merely the progressive domination of the God-consciousness within us over the merely sentient and ever morally defective world-consciousness. And for Ritschl it was the moral perfection of the Christian life to which we attain by fulfilling our vocation as members of the Kingdom of God. In a great deal of modern liberal theology sanctification consists only in the ever-increasing redemption of man's lower self by the domination of his higher self. Redemption by character is one of the slogans of the present day, and the term "sanctification" has come to stand for mere moral improvement.

C. THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF HOLINESS AND SANCTIFICATION.

1. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. In Scripture the quality of holiness applies first of all to God, and as applied to Him its fundamental idea is that of unapproachableness. And this unapproachableness is based on the fact that God is divine and therefore absolutely distinct from the creature. Holiness in this sense is not merely an attribute to be co-ordinated with others in God. It is rather something that is predicable of everything that is found in God. He is holy in His grace as well as in His righteousness, in His love as well as in His wrath. Strictly speaking, holiness becomes an attribute only in the later ethical sense of the word. The ethical meaning of the term developed out of the majesty-meaning. This development starts with the idea that a sinful being is more keenly conscious of the majesty of God than a sinless being. The sinner becomes aware of his impurity as over against the majestic purity of God, cf. Isa. 6. Otto speaks of holiness in the original sense as the numenous, and proposes to call the characteristic reaction to it "creature-feeling, or creature-consciousness," a disvaluation of self into nothingness, while he speaks of the reaction to holiness in the derived ethical sense as a "feeling of absolute profaneness." Thus the idea of holiness as majestic purity or ethical sublimity was developed. This purity is an active principle in God, that must vindicate itself and uphold its honor. This accounts for the fact that holiness is represented in Scripture also as the light of the divine glory turned into a devouring fire. Isa. 5:24; 10:17; 33:14,15. Over against the holiness of God man feels himself to be, not merely insignificant, but positively impure and sinful, and as such an object of God's wrath. God revealed His holiness in the Old Testament in various ways. He did it in terrible judgments upon the enemies of Israel, Ex. 15:11,12. He did it also by separating unto Himself a people, which He took out of the world, Ex. 19:4-6; Ezek. 20:39-44. By taking this people out of the impure and ungodly world, He protested against that world and its sin.

Moreover, He did it repeatedly in sparing His unfaithful people, because He did not want the unholy world to rejoice at what it might consider the failure of His work, Hos. 11:9.

In a derivative sense the idea of holiness is also applied to things and persons that are placed in a special relation to God. The land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, the temple-mount, the tabernacle and temple, the sabbaths and the solemn feasts of Israel, — they are all called holy, since they are consecrated to God and are placed within the radiance of His majestic holiness. Similarly, the prophets, the Levites, and the priests are called holy as persons that were set aside for the special service of the Lord. Israel had its sacred places, its sacred seasons, its sacred rites, and its sacred persons. This is not yet the ethical idea of holiness, however. One might be a sacred person, and yet be entirely devoid of the grace of God in his heart. In the old dispensation, as well as in the new, ethical holiness results from the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It should be remembered, however, that even where the conception of holiness is thoroughly spiritualized, it is always expressive of a relation. The idea of holiness is never that of moral goodness, considered in itself, but always that of ethical goodness seen in relation to God.

2. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. In passing from the Old Testament to the New we become aware of a striking difference. While in the Old Testament there is not a single attribute of God that stands out with anything like the same prominence as His holiness, in the New Testament holiness is seldom ascribed to God. Except in a few Old Testament quotations, it is done only in the writings of John, John 17:11; I John 2:20; Rev. 6:10. In all probability the explanation for this lies in the fact that in the New Testament holiness stands forth as the special characteristic of the Spirit of God, by whom believers are sanctified, are qualified for service, and are led to their eternal destiny, II Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5. The word *hagios* is used in connection with the Spirit of God well nigh a hundred times. The conception of holiness and sanctification,

however, is no other in the New Testament than it is in the Old. In the former as well as in the latter holiness is ascribed in a derived sense to man. In the one as well as in the other ethical holiness is not mere moral rectitude, and sanctification is never mere moral improvement. These two are often confused in the present day, when people speak of salvation by character. A man may boast of great moral improvement, and yet be an utter stranger to sanctification. The Bible does not urge moral improvement pure and simple, but moral improvement in relation to God, for God's sake, and with a view to the service of God. It insists on sanctification. At this very point much ethical preaching of the present day is utterly misleading; and the corrective for it lies in the presentation of the true doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification may be defined as *that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works.*

D. THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION.

1. IT IS A SUPERNATURAL WORK OF GOD. Some have the mistaken notion that sanctification consists merely in the drawing out of the new life, implanted in the soul by regeneration, in a persuasive way by presenting motives to the will. But this is not true. It consists fundamentally and primarily in a divine operation in the soul, whereby the holy disposition born in regeneration is strengthened and its holy exercises are increased. It is essentially a work of God, though in so far as He employs means, man can and is expected to co-operate by the proper use of these means. Scripture clearly exhibits the supernatural character of sanctification in several ways. It describes it as a work of God, I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20,21, as a fruit of the union of life with Jesus Christ, John 15:4; Gal. 2:20; 4:19, as a work that is wrought in man from within and which for that very reason cannot be a work of man, Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11, and speaks of its manifestation in Christian virtues as the work

of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. It should never be represented as a merely natural process in the spiritual development of man, nor brought down to the level of a mere human achievement, as is done in a great deal of modern liberal theology.

2. IT CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS. The two parts of sanctification are represented in Scripture as:

a. *The mortification of the old man, the body of sin.* This Scriptural term denotes that act of God whereby the pollution and corruption of human nature that results from sin is gradually removed. It is often represented in the Bible as the crucifying of the old man, and is thus connected with the death of Christ on the cross. The old man is human nature in so far as it is controlled by sin, Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24. In the context of the passage of Galatians Paul contrasts the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit, and then says: "And they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." This means that in their case the Spirit has gained predominance.

b. *The quickening of the new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* While the former part of sanctification is negative in character, this is positive. It is that act of God whereby the holy disposition of the soul is strengthened, holy exercises are increased, and thus a new course of life engendered and promoted. The old structure of sin is gradually torn down, and a new structure of God is reared in its stead. These two parts of sanctification are not successive but contemporaneous. Thank God, the gradual erection of the new building need not wait until the old one is completely demolished. If it had to wait for that, it could never begin in this life. With the gradual dissolution of the old the new makes its appearance. It is like the airing of a house filled with pestiferous odors. As the old air is drawn out, the new rushes in. This positive side of sanctification is often called "a being raised together with Christ," Rom. 6:4,5; Col. 2:12; 3:1,2. The new life to which it leads is called "a life unto God," Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:19.

3. IT AFFECTS THE WHOLE MAN: BODY AND SOUL; INTELLECT, AFFECTIONS AND WILL. This follows from the nature of the case, because sanctification takes place in the inner life of man, in the heart, and this cannot be changed without changing the whole organism of man. If the inner man is changed, there is bound to be change also in the periphery of life. Moreover, Scripture clearly and explicitly teaches that it affects both body and soul, I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:12; I Cor. 6:15,20. The body comes into consideration here as the organ or instrument of the sinful soul, through which the sinful inclinations and habits and passions express themselves. The sanctification of the body takes place especially in the crisis of death and in the resurrection of the dead. Finally, it also appears from Scripture that sanctification affects all the powers or faculties of the soul: the understanding, Jer. 31:34; John 6:45; — the will, Ezek. 36:25-27; Phil. 2:13; — the passions, Gal. 5:24; — and the conscience, Tit. 1:15; Heb. 9:14.

4. IT IS A WORK OF GOD IN WHICH BELIEVERS CO-OPERATE. When it is said that man takes part in the work of sanctification, this does not mean that man is an independent agent in the work, so as to make it partly the work of God and partly the work of man; but merely, that God effects the work in part through the instrumentality of man as a rational being, by requiring of him prayerful and intelligent co-operation with the Spirit. That man must co-operate with the Spirit of God follows: (a) from the repeated warnings against evils and temptations, which clearly imply that man must be active in avoiding the pitfalls of life, Rom. 12:9,16,17; I Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:16-23; and (b) from the constant exhortations to holy living. These imply that the believer must be diligent in the employment of the means at his command for the moral and spiritual improvement of his life, Micah 6:8; John 15:2,8,16; Rom. 8:12,13; 12:1,2,17; Gal. 6:7,8,15.

E. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SANCTIFICATION.

1. As appears from the immediately preceding, sanctification is a work of which God and not man is the author. Only the advocates of the so-called free will can claim that it is a work of man. Nevertheless, it differs from regeneration in that man can, and is in duty bound to, strive for ever-increasing sanctification by using the means which God has placed at his disposal. This is clearly taught in Scripture, II Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5-14; I Pet. 1:22. Consistent Antinomians lose sight of this important truth, and feel no need of carefully avoiding sin, since this affects only the old man which is condemned to death, and not the new man which is holy with the holiness of Christ.

2. Sanctification takes place partly in the subconscious life, and as such is an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit; but also partly in the conscious life, and then depends on the use of certain means, such as the constant exercise of faith, the study of God's Word, prayer, and association with other believers.

3. Sanctification is usually a lengthy process and never reaches perfection in this life. At the same time there may be cases in which it is completed in a very short time or even in a moment, as, for instance, in cases in which regeneration and conversion are immediately followed by temporal death. If we may proceed on the assumption that the believer's sanctification is perfect immediately after death — and Scripture seems to teach this as far as the soul is concerned —, then in such cases the sanctification of the soul must be completed almost at once.

4. The sanctification of the believer must, it would seem, be completed either at the very moment of death, or immediately after death, as far as the soul is concerned, and at the resurrection in so far as it pertains to the body. This would seem to follow from that fact that, on the one hand, the Bible teaches that in the present life no one can claim freedom from sin, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Rom. 3:10,12; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8; and that, on the other hand, those who have gone before are entirely sanctified. It speaks of them as "the

spirits of just men made perfect,” Heb. 12:23, and as “without blemish,” Rev. 14:5. Moreover, we are told that in the heavenly city of God there shall in no wise enter “anything unclean or he that maketh an abomination and a lie,” Rev. 21:27; and that Christ at His coming will “fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory,” Phil. 3:21.

F. THE AUTHOR AND MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

Sanctification is a work of the triune God, but is ascribed more particularly to the Holy Spirit in Scripture, Rom. 8:11; 15:16; I Pet. 1:2. It is particularly important in our day, with its emphasis on the necessity of approaching the study of theology anthropologically and its one-sided call to service in the kingdom of God, to stress the fact that God, and not man, is the author of sanctification. Especially in view of the Activism that is such a characteristic feature of American religious life, and which glorifies the work of man rather than the grace of God, it is necessary to stress the fact over and over again that sanctification is the fruit of justification, that the former is simply impossible without the latter, and that both are the fruits of the grace of God in the redemption of sinners. Though man is privileged to co-operate with the Spirit of God, he can do this only in virtue of the strength which the Spirit imparts to him from day to day. The spiritual development of man is not a human achievement, but a work of divine grace. Man deserves no credit whatsoever for that which he contributes to it instrumentally. In so far as sanctification takes place in the subconscious life, it is effected by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. But as a work in the conscious life of believers it is wrought by several means, which the Holy Spirit employs.

1. THE WORD OF GOD. In opposition to the Church of Rome it should be maintained that the principal means used by the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. The truth in itself certainly has no

adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer, yet it is naturally adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit. Scripture presents all the objective conditions for holy exercises and acts. It serves to excite spiritual activity by presenting motives and inducements, and gives direction to it by prohibitions, exhortations, and examples, I Pet. 1:22; 2:2; II Pet. 1:4.

2. THE SACRAMENTS. These are the means *par excellence* according to the Church of Rome. Protestants regard them as subordinate to the Word of God, and sometimes even speak of them as the “visible Word.” They symbolize and seal to us the same truths that are verbally expressed in the Word of God, and may be regarded as an acted word, containing a lively representation of the truth, which the Holy Spirit makes the occasion for holy exercises. They are not only subordinate to the Word of God, but cannot exist without it, and are therefore always accompanied by it, Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:5; I Pet, 3:21.

3. PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE. God’s providences, both favorable and adverse, are often powerful means of sanctification. In connection with the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, they work on our natural affections and thus frequently deepen the impression of religious truth and force it home. It should be borne in mind that the light of God’s revelation is necessary for the interpretation of His providential guidances, Ps. 119:71; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:10.

G. RELATION OF SANCTIFICATION TO OTHER STAGES IN THE ORDO SALUTIS.

It is of considerable importance to have a correct conception of the relation between sanctification and some of the other stages in the work of redemption.

1. TO REGENERATION. There is both difference and similarity here. Regeneration is completed at once, for a man cannot be more or less regenerated; he is either dead or alive spiritually. Sanctification is a process, bringing about gradual changes, so that different grades may be distinguished in the resulting holiness. Hence we are admonished to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, II Cor. 7:1. The Heidelberg Catechism also presupposes that there are degrees of holiness, when it says that even “the holiest men, when in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience.”[Q. 114.] At the same time regeneration is the beginning of sanctification. The work of renewal, begun in the former, is continued in the latter, Phil. 1:6. Strong says: “It (sanctification) is distinguished from regeneration as growth from birth, or as the strengthening of a holy disposition from the original impartation of it.”[*Syst. Theol.*, p. 871.]

2. TO JUSTIFICATION. Justification precedes and is basic to sanctification in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works the order of righteousness and holiness was just the reverse. Adam was created with a holy disposition and inclination to serve God, but on the basis of this holiness he had to work out the righteousness that would entitle him to eternal life. Justification is the judicial basis for sanctification. God has the right to demand of us holiness of life, but because we cannot work out this holiness for ourselves, He freely works it within us through the Holy Spirit on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us in justification. The very fact that it is based on justification, in which the free grace of God stands out with the greatest prominence, excludes the idea that we can ever merit anything in sanctification. The Roman Catholic idea that justification enables man to perform meritorious works is contrary to Scripture. Justification as such does not effect a change in our inner being and therefore needs sanctification as its complement. It is not sufficient that the sinner stands righteous before God; he must also be holy in his inmost life. Barth has a rather unusual representation of the relation between justification and sanctification. In order to ward off all self-

righteousness, he insists on it that the two always be considered jointly. They go together and should not be considered quantitatively, as if the one followed the other. Justification is not a station which one passes, an accomplished fact on the basis of which one next proceeds to the highway of sanctification. It is not a completed fact to which one can look back with definite assurance, but occurs ever anew whenever man has reached the point of complete despair, and then goes hand in hand with sanctification. And just as man remains a sinner even after justification, so he also remains a sinner in sanctification, even his best deeds continue to be sins. Sanctification does not engender a holy disposition, and does not gradually purify man. It does not put him in possession of any personal holiness, does not make him a saint, but leaves him a sinner. It really becomes a declarative act like justification. McConnachie, who is a very sympathetic interpreter of Barth, says: "Justification and sanctification are, therefore, to Barth, two sides of one act of God upon men. Justification is the pardon of the sinner (*justificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner righteous. Sanctification is the sanctification of the sinner (*sanctificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner 'holy'." However laudable the desire of Barth to destroy every vestige of work-righteousness, he certainly goes to an unwarranted extreme, in which he virtually confuses justification and sanctification, negatives the Christian life, and rules out the possibility of confident assurance.

3. TO FAITH. Faith is the mediate or instrumental cause of sanctification as well as of justification. It does not merit sanctification any more than it does justification, but it unites us to Christ and keeps us in touch with Him as the Head of the new humanity, who is the source of the new life within us, and also of our progressive sanctification, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The consciousness of the fact that sanctification is based on justification, and is impossible on any other basis, and that the constant exercise of faith is necessary, in order to advance in the way of holiness, will guard us against all self-righteousness in our striving to advance in godliness and holiness of life. It deserves

particular attention that, while even the weakest faith mediates a perfect justification, the degree of sanctification is commensurate with the strength of the Christian's faith and the persistence with which he apprehends Christ.

H. THE IMPERFECT CHARACTER OF SANCTIFICATION IN THIS LIFE.

1. SANCTIFICATION IMPERFECT IN DEGREE. When we speak of sanctification as being imperfect in this life, we do not mean to say that it is imperfect in parts, as if only a part of the holy man that originates in regeneration were affected. It is the whole, but yet undeveloped new man, that must grow into full stature. A new-born child is, barring exceptions, perfect in parts, but not yet in the degree of development for which it is intended. Just so the new man is perfect in parts, but remains in the present life imperfect in the degree of spiritual development. Believers must contend with sin as long as they live, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8.

2. DENIAL OF THIS IMPERFECTION BY THE PERFECTIONISTS.

a. *The doctrine of perfectionism.* Speaking generally, this doctrine is to the effect that religious perfection is attainable in the present life. It is taught in various forms by Pelagians, Roman Catholics or Semi-Pelagians, Arminians, Wesleyans, such mystical sects as the Labadists, the Quietists, the Quakers, and others, some of the Oberlin theologians, such as Mahan and Finney, and Ritschl. These all agree in maintaining that it is possible for believers in this life to attain to a state in which they comply with the requirements of the law *under which they now live*, or under that law *as it was adjusted to their present ability and needs*, and, consequently, to be free from sin. They differ, however: (1) In their view of sin, the Pelagians, in distinction from all the rest, denying the inherent

corruption of man. They all agree, however, in externalizing sin. (2) In their conception of the law which believers are now obliged to fulfill, the Arminians, including the Wesleyans, differing from all the rest in holding that this is not the original moral law, but the gospel requirements or the new law of faith and evangelical obedience. The Roman Catholics and the Oberlin theologians maintain that it is the original law, but admit that the demands of this law are adjusted to man's deteriorated powers and to his present ability. And Ritschl discards the whole idea that man is subject to an externally imposed law. He defends the autonomy of moral conduct, and holds that we are under no law but such as is evolved out of our own moral disposition in the course of activities for the fulfilment of our vocation. (3) In their idea of the sinner's dependence on the renewing grace of God for the ability to fulfill the law. All, except the Pelagians, admit that he is in some sense dependent on divine grace, in order to the attainment of perfection.

It is very significant that all the leading perfectionist theories (with the sole exception of the Pelagian, which denies the inherent corruption of man) deem it necessary to lower the standard of perfection and do not hold man responsible for a great deal that is undoubtedly demanded by the original moral law. And it is equally significant that they feel the necessity of externalizing the idea of sin, when they claim that only conscious wrong-doing can be so considered, and refuse to recognize as sin a great deal that is represented as such in Scripture.

b. Scriptural proofs adduced for the doctrine of perfectionism.

(1) The Bible commands believers to be holy and even to be perfect, I Pet. 1:16; Matt. 5:48; Jas. 1:4, and urges them to follow the example of Christ who did no sin, I Pet. 2:21 f. Such commands would be unreasonable, if it were not possible to reach sinless perfection. But the Scriptural demand to be holy and perfect holds for the unregenerate as well as for the regenerate, since the law of God demands holiness from the start and has never been revoked. If

the command implies that they to whom it comes can live up to the requirement, this must be true of every man. However, only those who teach perfectionism in the Pelagian sense can hold that view. The measure of our ability cannot be inferred from the Scriptural commandments.

(2) Holiness and perfection are often ascribed to believers in Scripture, Song of Sol. 4:7; I Cor. 2:6; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:27; Heb. 5:14; Phil. 4:13; Col. 2:10. When the Bible speaks of believers as holy and perfect, however, this does not necessarily mean that they are without sin, since both words are often used in a different sense, not only in common parlance, but also in the Bible. Persons set aside for the special service of God are called holy in the Bible, irrespective of their moral condition and life. Believers can be and are called holy, because they are objectively holy in Christ, or because they are in principle subjectively sanctified by the Spirit of God. Paul in his Epistles invariably addresses his readers as saints, that is "holy ones," and then proceeds in several cases to take them to task for their sins. And when believers are described as perfect, this means in some cases merely that they are full-grown, I Cor. 2:6; Heb. 5:14, and in others that they are fully equipped for their task, II Tim. 3:17. All this certainly does not give countenance to the theory of sin less perfection.

(3) There are, it is said, Biblical examples of saints who led perfect lives, such as Noah, Job, and Asa, Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1; I Kings 15:14. But, surely, such examples as these do not prove the point for the simple reason that they are no examples of sinless perfection. Even the most notable saints of the Bible are pictured as men who had their failings and who sinned, in some cases very grievously. This is true of Noah, Moses, Job, Abraham, and all the others. It is true that this does not necessarily prove that their lives remained sinful as long as they lived on earth, but it is a striking fact that we are not introduced to a single one who was without sin. The question of Solomon is still pertinent: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Prov. 20:9. Moreover, John says: "If

we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," I John 1:8.

(4) The apostle John declares explicitly that they who are born of God do not sin, I John 3:6,8,9; 5:18. But when John says that they who are born of God do not sin, he is contrasting the two states, represented by the old and the new man, as to their essential nature and principle. One of the essential characteristics of the new man is that he does not sin. In view of the fact that John invariably uses the present to express the idea that the one born of God does not sin, it is possible that he desires to express the idea that the child of God does not *go on sinning habitually*, as the devil does, I John 3:8. [Cf. Robertson, *The Minister and His Greek Testament*, p. 100.] He certainly does not mean to assert that the believer never commits an act of sin, cf. I John 1:8-10. Moreover, the Perfectionist cannot very well use these passages to prove his point, since they would prove too much for his purpose. He does not make bold to say that all believers are actually sinless, but only that they can reach a state of sinless perfection. The Johannine passages, however, would prove, on his interpretation, that all believers are without sin. And more than that, they would also prove that believers never fall from the state of grace (for this is sinning); and yet the Perfectionists are the very people who believe that even perfect Christians may fall away.

c. Objections to the theory of Perfectionism.

(1) In the light of Scripture the doctrine of Perfectionism is absolutely untenable. The Bible gives us the explicit and very definite assurance that there is no one on earth who does not sin, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8. In view of these clear statements of Scripture it is hard to see how any who claim to believe the Bible as the infallible Word of God can hold that it is possible for believers to lead sinless lives, and that some actually succeed in avoiding all sin.

(2) According to Scripture there is a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of God's children, and even the best of them are still striving for perfection. Paul gives a very striking description of this struggle in Rom. 7:7-26, a passage which certainly refers to him in his regenerate state. In Gal. 5:16-24 he speaks of that very same struggle as a struggle that characterizes all the children of God. And in Phil. 3:10-14 he speaks of himself, practically at the end of his career, as one who has not yet reached perfection, but is pressing on toward the goal.

(3) Confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness are continually required. Jesus taught all His disciples without any exception to pray for the forgiveness of sins and for deliverance from temptation and from the evil one, Matt. 6:12,13. And John says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," I John 1:9. Moreover, Bible saints are constantly represented as confessing their sins, Job 9:3,20; Ps. 32:5; 130:3; 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Isa. 64:6; Dan. 9:16; Rom. 7:14.

(4) The Perfectionists themselves deem it necessary to lower the standard of the law and to externalize the idea of sin, in order to maintain their theory. Moreover, some of them have repeatedly modified the ideal to which, in their estimation, believers can attain. At first the ideal was "freedom from all sin"; then, "freedom from all conscious sin," next, "entire consecration to God," and, finally, "Christian assurance." This is in itself a sufficient condemnation of their theory. We naturally do not deny that the Christian can attain to the assurance of faith.

I. SANCTIFICATION AND GOOD WORKS.

Sanctification and good works are most intimately related. Just as the old life expresses itself in works of evil, so the new life, that originates in regeneration and is promoted and strengthened in

sanctification, naturally manifests itself in good works. These may be called the fruits of sanctification, and as such come into consideration here.

1. THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS.

a. *Good works in the specifically theological sense.* When we speak of good works in connection with sanctification, we do not refer to works that are perfect, that answer perfectly to the requirements of the divine moral law, and that are of such inherent worth as to entitle one to the reward of eternal life under the conditions of the covenant of works. We do mean, however, works that are essentially different in moral quality from the actions of the unregenerate, and that are the expressions of a new and holy nature, as the principle from which they spring. These are works which God not only approves, but in a certain sense also rewards. The following are the characteristics of works that are spiritually good: (1) They are the fruits of a regenerate heart, since without this no one can have the disposition (to obey God) and the motive (to glorify God) that is required, Matt. 12:33; 7:17,18. (2) They are not only in external conformity with the law of God, but are also done in conscious obedience to the revealed will of God, that is, because they are required by God. They spring from the principle of love to God and from the desire to do His will, Deut. 6:2; I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:12; 29:13; Matt. 15:9. (3) Whatever their proximate aim may be, their final aim is not the welfare of man, but the glory of God, which is the highest conceivable aim of man's life, I Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:1; Col. 3:17,23.

b. *Good works in a more general sense.* Though the term "good works" is generally used in theology in the strict sense just indicated, it remains true that the unregenerate can also perform works that may be called good in a superficial sense of the word. They often perform works that are in outward conformity with the law of God and may be called objectively good, in distinction from flagrant transgressions of the law. Such works answer to a

proximate aim that meets with the approval of God. Moreover, in virtue of the remains of the image of God in the natural man and of the light of nature, man may be guided in his relation to other men by motives which are laudable and in so far bear the stamp of God's approval. Those good works, however, cannot be regarded as fruits of the corrupt heart of man. They find their explanation only in the common grace of God. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that, though these works can be called good in a certain sense and are so called in the Bible, Luke 6:33, they are yet essentially defective. The deeds of the unregenerate are divorced from the spiritual root of love to God. They represent no inner obedience to the law of God and no subjection to the will of the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. They have no spiritual aim, since they are not performed for the purpose of glorifying God, but only bear on the relations of the natural life. The real quality of the act is, of course, determined by the quality of its final aim. The ability of the unregenerate to perform good works in some sense of the word has often been denied. Barth goes one step further when he goes to the extreme of denying that believers can do good works, and asserts that all their works are sins.

2. THE MERITORIOUS CHARACTER OF GOOD WORKS.

Even from the earliest ages of the Christian Church there was a tendency to ascribe a certain merit to good works, but the doctrine of merit was really developed in the Middle Ages. At the time of the Reformation it was very prominent in Roman Catholic theology and was pushed to ridiculous extremes in practical life. The Reformers at once joined issue with the Church of Rome on this point.

a. *The position of Rome on the point in question.* The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes between a *meritum de condigno*, which represents inherent dignity and worth, and a *meritum de congruo*, which is a sort of quasi-merit, something fit to be rewarded. The former attaches only to works done after regeneration by the aid of divine grace, and is a merit which intrinsically deserves the reward it receives from the hand of God.

The latter attaches to those dispositions or works which a man may develop or do before regeneration, in virtue of a mere prevenient grace, and is a merit which makes it congruous or fitting for God to reward the agent by infusing grace into his heart. Since the decisions of the Council of Trent are rather dubious on this point, there is some uncertainty, however, as to the exact position of the Church. The general idea seems to be that the ability to perform good works in the strict sense of the word springs from grace infused into the sinner's heart for the sake of Christ; and that afterwards these good works merit, that is, give man a just claim to, salvation and glory. The Church goes even farther than that, and teaches that believers can perform works of supererogation, can do more than is necessary for their own salvation and can thus lay by a store of good works, which may accrue to the benefit of others.

b. *The Scriptural position on this point.* Scripture clearly teaches that the good works of believers are not meritorious in the proper sense of the word. We should bear in mind, however, that the word "merit" is employed in a twofold sense, the one strict and proper, and the other loose. Strictly speaking, a meritorious work is one to which, on account of its intrinsic value and dignity, the reward is justly due from commutative justice. Loosely speaking, however, a work that is deserving of approval and to which a reward is somehow attached (by promise, agreement, or otherwise) is also sometimes called meritorious. Such works are praiseworthy and are rewarded by God. But, however this may be, they are surely not meritorious in the strict sense of the word. They do not, by their own intrinsic moral value, make God a debtor to him who performs them. In strict justice the good works of believers merit nothing. Some of the most conclusive passages of Scripture to prove the point under consideration are the following: Luke 17:9,10; Rom. 5:15-18; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10; II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5. These passages clearly show that believers do not receive the inheritance of salvation because it is due to them in virtue of their good works, but only as a free gift of God. It stands to reason also that such works cannot be meritorious, for: (1) Believers owe their whole life to God

and therefore cannot merit anything by giving God simply what is His due, Luke 17:9,10. (2) They cannot perform good works in their own strength, but only in the strength which God imparts to them from day to day; and in view of that fact they cannot expect the credit for these works, I Cor. 15:10; Phil. 2:13. (3) Even the best works of believers remain imperfect in this life, and all good works together represent only a partial obedience, while the law demands perfect obedience and can be satisfied with nothing less, Isa. 64:6; Jas. 3:2. (4) Moreover, the good works of believers are out of all proportion to the eternal reward of glory. A temporal and imperfect obedience can never merit an eternal and perfect reward.

3. THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS. There can be no doubt about the necessity of good works properly understood. They cannot be regarded as necessary to merit salvation, nor as a means to retain a hold on salvation, nor even as the only way along which to proceed to eternal glory, for children enter salvation without having done any good works. The Bible does not teach that no one can be saved apart from good works. At the same time good works necessarily follow from the union of believers with Christ. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit," John 15:5. They are also necessary as required by God, Rom. 7:4; 8:12,13; Gal. 6:2, as the fruits of faith, Jas. 2:14,17,20-22, as expressions of gratitude, I Cor. 6:20, unto the assurance of faith, II Peter 1:5-10, and to the glory of God, John 15:8; I Cor. 10:31. The necessity of good works must be maintained over against the Antinomians, who claim that, since Christ not only bore the penalty of sin, but also met the positive demands of the law, the believer is free from the obligation to observe it, an error that is still with us to-day in some of the forms of dispensationalism. This is a thoroughly false position, for it is only the law as a system of penalty and as a method of salvation that is abolished in the death of Christ. The law as the standard of our moral life is a transcript of the holiness of God and is therefore of permanent validity also for the believer, though his attitude to the law has undergone a radical change. He has received the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of obedience, so that, without any

constraint, he willingly obeys the law. Strong sums it up well, when he says: Christ frees us “(1) from the law as a system of curse and penalty; this He does by bearing the curse and penalty Himself . . . ; (2) from the law with its claims as a method of salvation; this He does by making His obedience and merits ours . . . ; (3) from the law as an outward and foreign compulsion; this He does by giving us the spirit of obedience and sonship, by which the law is progressively realized within.”[*Syst. Theol.*, p. 876.]

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: How was theocratic, related to ethical, holiness among Israel? How were the ritual purifications related to sanctification? Who is the subject of sanctification, the old man or the new, or neither of the two? Does sanctification in this life affect all parts of man equally? Where does the process of sanctification begin? Do all Christians experience a steady progress in sanctification? What is the difference between sanctification and moral improvement? Does the fact that sanctification is never complete in this life necessarily lead to the doctrine of purgatory, or to that of the continuation of sanctification after death? How did Wesley conceive of “entire sanctification”? Does Barth also ascribe holiness as an ethical quality to the believer? What Scripture proof is there that the Christian is not free from the law as a rule of life? Do Protestants in general teach that good works are not necessary? How do Roman Catholics and Protestants differ as to the necessity of good works? Is it wise to say without any qualification that good works are necessary unto salvation? If all Christians inherit eternal life, in what sense will their good works be the standard of their reward?

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XI. Perseverance of the Saints

A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS IN HISTORY.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is to the effect that they whom God has regenerated and effectually called to a state of grace, can neither totally nor finally fall away from that state, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved. This doctrine was first explicitly taught by Augustine, though he was not as consistent on this point as might have been expected of him as a strict predestinarian. With him the doctrine did not assume the form just stated. He held that the elect could not so fall away as to be finally lost, but at the same time considered it possible that some who were endowed with new life and true faith could fall from grace completely and at last suffer eternal damnation. The Church of Rome with its Semi-Pelagianism, including the doctrine of free will, denied the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and made their perseverance dependent on the uncertain obedience of man. The Reformers restored this doctrine to its rightful place. The Lutheran Church, however, makes it uncertain again by making it contingent on man's continued activity of faith, and by assuming that true believers can fall completely from grace. It is only in the Calvinistic Churches that the doctrine is maintained in a form in which it affords absolute assurance. The Canons of Dort, after calling attention to the many weaknesses and failures of the children of God, declare: "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or

against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.”[V, Art. 6.] The Arminians rejected this view and made the perseverance of believers dependent on their will to believe and on their good works. Arminius himself avoided that extreme, but his followers did not hesitate to maintain their synergistic position with all its consequences. The Wesleyan Arminians followed suit as did several of the sects. The Reformed or Calvinistic Churches stand practically alone in giving a negative answer to the question, whether a Christian can completely fall from the state of grace and be finally lost.

B. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

The doctrine of perseverance requires careful statement, especially in view of the fact that the term “perseverance of the saints” is liable to misunderstanding. It should be noted first of all that the doctrine is not merely to the effect that the elect will certainly be saved in the end, though Augustine has given it that form, but teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear. Moreover, we should guard against the possible misunderstanding that this perseverance is regarded as an inherent property of the believer or as a continuous activity of man, by means of which he perseveres in the way of salvation. When Strong speaks of it as “the voluntary continuance, on the part of the Christian, in faith and well-doing,” and as “the human side or aspect of that spiritual process which, as viewed from the divine side, we call sanctification,” — this is certainly liable to create the impression

that perseverance depends on man. The Reformed, however, do not consider the perseverance of the saints as being, first of all, a disposition or activity of the believer, though they certainly believe that man co-operates in it just as he does in sanctification. They even stress the fact that the believer would fall away, if he were left to himself. It is, strictly speaking, not man but God who perseveres. Perseverance may be defined as *that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion.* It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.

C. PROOF FOR THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

The doctrine of perseverance may be proved by certain statements of Scripture and by inference from other doctrines.

1. DIRECT STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE. There are some important passages of Scripture that come into consideration here. In John 10:27-29 we read: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." Paul says in Rom. 11:29: "For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of." This means that the grace of God revealed in His calling is never withdrawn, as though He repented of it. This is a general statement, though in the connection in which it is found it refers to the calling of Israel. The apostle comforts the believing Philippians with the words: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. 1:6. In II Thess. 3:3 he says: "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one." In II Tim. 1:12 he sounds a note of rejoicing: "For I know Him whom I have believed,

and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” And in 4:18 of the same Epistle he glories in the fact that the Lord will deliver him from every evil work and will save him unto His heavenly kingdom.

2. INFERENTIAL PROOFS. The doctrine of perseverance may also be proved in an inferential way.

a. *From the doctrine of election.* Election does not merely mean that some will be favored with certain external privileges and *may be saved*, if they do their duty, but that they who belong to the number of the elect shall finally be saved and can never fall short of perfect salvation. It is an election unto an end, that is, unto salvation. In working it out God endows believers with such influences of the Holy Spirit as to lead them, not only to accept Christ, but to persevere unto the end and to be saved unto the uttermost.

b. *From the doctrine of the covenant of redemption.* In the covenant of redemption God gave His people to His Son as the reward for the latter’s obedience and suffering. This reward was fixed from eternity and was not left contingent on any uncertain faithfulness of man. God does not go back on His promise, and therefore it is impossible that they who are reckoned as being in Christ, and as forming a part of His reward, can be separated from Him (Rom. 8:38,39), and that they who have entered the covenant as a communion of life should fall out.

c. *From the efficacy of the merits and intercession of Christ.* In His atoning work Christ paid the price to purchase the sinner’s pardon and acceptance. His righteousness constitutes the perfect ground for the justification of the sinner, and it is impossible that one who is justified by the payment of such a perfect and efficacious price should again fall under condemnation. Moreover, Christ makes constant intercession for those who are given Him of the Father, and His intercessory prayer for His people is always efficacious, John 11:42; Heb. 7:25.

d. *From the mystical union with Christ.* They who are united to Christ by faith become partakers of His Spirit, and thus become one body with Him, pulsating with the life of the Spirit. They share in the life of Christ, and because He lives they live also. It is impossible that they should again be removed from the body, thus frustrating the divine ideal. The union is permanent, since it originates in a permanent and unchangeable cause, the free and eternal love of God.

e. *From the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart.* Dabney correctly says: "It is a low and unworthy estimate of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and of His work in the heart, to suppose that He will begin the work now, and presently desert it; that the vital spark of heavenly birth is an *ignis fatuus*, burning for a short season, and then expiring in utter darkness; that the spiritual life communicated in the new birth, is a sort of spasmodic or galvanic vitality, giving the outward appearance of life in the dead soul, and then dying." [*Syst. and Polem. Theol.*, p. 692.] According to Scripture the believer is already in this life in possession of salvation and eternal life, John 3:36; 5:24; 6:54. Can we proceed on the assumption that eternal life will not be everlasting?

f. *From the assurance of salvation.* It is quite evident from Scripture that believers can in this life attain to the assurance of salvation, Heb. 3:14; 6:11; 10:22; II Pet. 1:10. This would seem to be entirely out of the question, if it were possible for believers to fall from grace at any moment. It can be enjoyed only by those who stand in the firm conviction that God will perfect the work which He has begun.

D. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

1. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH HUMAN FREEDOM. It is said that the doctrine of perseverance is inconsistent with human

freedom. But this objection proceeds on the false assumption that real freedom consists in the liberty of indifference, or the power of contrary choice in moral and spiritual matters. This is erroneous, however. True liberty consists exactly in self-determination in the direction of holiness. Man is never more free than when he moves consciously in the direction of God. And the Christian stands in that liberty through the grace of God.

2. IT LEADS TO INDOLENCE AND IMMORALITY. It is confidently asserted that the doctrine of perseverance leads to indolence, license, and even immorality. A false security is said to result from it. This is a mistaken notion, however, for, although the Bible tells us that we are kept by the grace of God, it does not encourage the idea that God keeps us without constant watchfulness, diligence, and prayer on our part. It is hard to see how a doctrine which assures the believer of a perseverance in holiness can be an incentive for sin. It would seem that the certainty of success in the active striving for sanctification would be the best possible stimulus to ever greater exertion.

3. IT IS CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE. The doctrine is frequently declared to be contrary to Scripture. The passages adduced to prove this contention can be reduced to three classes.

a. There are warnings against apostasy which would seem to be quite uncalled for, if the believer could not fall away, Matt. 24:12; Col. 1:23; Heb. 2:1; 3:14; 6:11; I John 2:6. But these warnings regard the whole matter from the side of man and are seriously meant. They prompt self-examination, and are instrumental in keeping believers in the way of perseverance. They do not prove that any of those addressed will apostatize, but simply that the use of means is necessary to prevent them from committing this sin. Compare Acts 27:22-25 with verse 31 for an illustration of this principle.

b. There are also exhortations, urging believers to continue in the way of sanctification, which would appear to be unnecessary if there

is no doubt about it that they will continue to the end. But these are usually found in connection with such warnings as those referred to under (a), and serve exactly the same purpose. They do not prove that any of the believers exhorted will not persevere, but only that God uses moral means for the accomplishment of moral ends.

c. Again, it is said that Scripture records several cases of actual apostasy, I Tim. 1:19,20; II Tim. 2:17,18; 4:10; II Peter 2:1,2; cf. also Heb. 6:4-6. But these instances do not prove the contention that real believers, in possession of true saving faith, can fall from grace, unless it be shown first that the persons indicated in these passages had true faith in Christ, and not a mere temporal faith, which is not rooted in regeneration. The Bible teaches us that there are persons who profess the true faith, and yet are not of the faith, Rom. 9-6; I John 2:19; Rev. 3:1. John says of some of them, "They went out from us," and adds by way of explanation, "but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us," I John 2:19.

E. THE DENIAL OF THIS DOCTRINE MAKES SALVATION DEPENDENT ON MAN'S WILL.

The denial of the doctrine of perseverance virtually makes the salvation of man dependent on the human will rather than on the grace of God. This consideration will, of course, have no effect on those who share the Pelagian conception of salvation as autosoteric — and their numbers are great — but certainly ought to cause those to pause who glory in being saved by grace. The idea is that, after man is brought to a state of grace by the operation of the Holy Spirit alone, or by the joint operation of the Holy Spirit and the will of man, it rests solely with man to continue in faith or to forsake the faith, just as he sees fit. This renders the cause of man very precarious and makes it impossible for him to attain to the blessed

assurance of faith. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to maintain the doctrine of perseverance. In the words of Hovey, “It may be a source of great comfort and power, — an incentive to gratitude, a motive to self-sacrifice, and a pillar of fire in the hour of danger.”

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What is the real question concerning perseverance: is it whether the *elect*, or whether the *regenerate* persevere? Do Augustine and the Lutherans also teach that the *elect* may finally be lost? How does the analogy of the natural life favor the doctrine of perseverance? Do not such passages as Heb. 6:4-6; 10:29; II Pet. 2:1 prove the possibility of falling away? How about John 15:1-6? Is the grace of perseverance something innate, necessarily given with the new nature, or is it the fruit of a special, gracious, and preserving activity of God? Does the doctrine imply that one may be living in habitual and intentional sin, and yet be in a justified state? Does it preclude the idea of lapses into sin?

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