



# REFORMED

— PAVILION —

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 19

AUGUST 19, 2023

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning  
*From the Ramparts* Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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## MEDITATION

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

—Exodus 4:24–26

**W**hat a lovely incident in the inn by the way!

A man marked for death came to the inn; a man restored to life left. A family in the throes of unbelief came to the inn; a family of faith left. A covenant child without sign or seal of the righteousness of faith came to the inn; a circumcised child left. Covenant breakers came to the inn; friends of God left. Lovely incident, indeed!

Many would disagree. Many find it to be an ugly incident. First, many complain that there are not enough details to make sense of the event. Ah, but God in the writing of this event stripped it of all its extra details so that the one important thing would stand out to us and be impossible to miss: the gospel of circumcision. Second, many take Zipporah to be a bitter and unbelieving woman, who first prevented Eliezer's circumcision and then threw a tantrum when she was finally compelled to circumcise him. Ah, but Zipporah acted in faith; and her words, rightly understood, are a beautiful confession of God's mercy and goodness. The incident in the inn by the way is not ugly but lovely.

What happened in the inn by the way? Moses, his wife Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, had left Midian and were making their way to Egypt. They had stopped at an inn by the way for refreshment. God met Moses in the inn, took hold of him, and sought to kill him. The reason for God's coming to kill Moses was plain to Moses and Zipporah: Moses had failed to circumcise one of his sons—likely Eliezer, the

younger son. Seeing her husband about to be killed by God, Zipporah took a sharp stone and circumcised her son on the spot.

The confusion in understanding the text arises out of what Zipporah did and said next. Zipporah “cast” Eliezer's foreskin at Moses' feet, and Zipporah said that Moses was “a bloody husband” to her because of the circumcision. It sounds like a bitter tantrum. But a more literal translation gives an entirely different picture. Zipporah caused Eliezer's foreskin to touch Moses' feet. The scene is not that of a raging woman flinging a scrap of flesh at Moses' feet but that of a humble woman with bloody hands holding a bloody foreskin, kneeling down at Moses' feet before Jehovah, who held Moses in a death grip. And after God let Moses go, Zipporah said to Moses, “Surely a bridegroom of blood thou art to me.” The term she used—bridegroom—was a term of affection and tenderness. Zipporah's speech was not that of a scornful woman's spitting her contempt at the husband who displeased her but that of an affectionate wife's confessing her wonder that God had restored her beloved bridegroom to her, though neither she nor Moses deserved to live.

Moses and Zipporah and their family escaped the inn with their lives. Why? Was it because they had been faithful to God's covenant and God's law? Not at all. Moses and Zipporah had failed to circumcise Eliezer as God's covenant and God's law required, and therefore Eliezer—and the whole family with him—deserved to die (Gen. 17:9–14). Nor did they live because they had now

finally performed the external rite of circumcision. If Zipporah had cut Eliezer's foreskin, ranting and cursing all the while about her hatred of circumcision, God would not have let Moses go. God has no delight in external ceremonies.

Then why did Moses and Zipporah and their family live? Because of the righteousness of Christ, which was theirs by faith, which the sacrament of circumcision signified and sealed. Why did Moses and Zipporah and their family live? Because of the unconditional grace of God, which saved unworthy sinners and brought them into fellowship with him. The incident in the inn by the way was not a demonstration of

Zipporah's contempt for the blood of circumcision. Rather, it was a demonstration of the grace of God, who saves his unworthy people by the blood of Christ.

As it was for Moses' family, so it would be for the nation of Israel. The gospel of circumcision must be impressed upon Moses, who would shortly lead God's unworthy people out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Why? So that Moses, Israel, and we might know that it is only of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

What a lovely incident of grace and faith and the gospel in the inn by the way!

—AL

## THE SCRIVENER

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

—Romans 3:28

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

—Galatians 2:16

### Justification by Faith Alone

The topic of the doctrines class tonight is "Justification by Faith Alone."<sup>1</sup> The occasion for this topic tonight is the appearance recently of posts by Professor Engelsma. There was a writing dated July 29, 2023; there was a second writing that does not contain a date that I could find, but there are indications that it was written in August. As I understand it, both of those writings made their way to Facebook and became public and have been distributed among some, if not among many. In those two posts Professor Engelsma attacks the truth of justification by faith alone.

During times of reformation, including the reformation in which we live, the truth of justification by faith alone is always under attack. And one of the glorious benefits of reformation is that God grants his church the opportunity to study that doctrine of justification by faith alone again and again. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is not a one-off doctrine. It is not a doctrine that we study once; it is not a doctrine that we study for a year and then leave behind; it is not even a doctrine that we study in one reformation and then leave behind. The truth of justification by faith alone is the heart of the

<sup>1</sup> This is a copyedited transcript of a speech given August 9, 2023, for Remnant Reformed Church, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUAH0-R8MWA>.

gospel, and it is our privilege to continue to study that doctrine, especially when it comes under renewed attack.

In Professor Engelsma's latest attack against the truth of justification by faith alone, he refers to those who left the Protestant Reformed Churches. His attack includes a personal attack against us. But the most egregious thing about his attack is his attack on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, for the comfort and the peace of the church of Jesus Christ is that she is justified by faith and not by her works.

And so tonight it is our glorious, God-given privilege to study again the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

### Definition of Justification

Let's begin by seeing positively what the doctrine of justification by faith alone teaches. A working definition of *justification* is *God's declaration that the elect sinner is righteous for Jesus' sake*. And if we break that definition down into some of its components, the truth of justification will shine very brightly for our comfort.

First, the truth of justification is that justification is a declaration by Jehovah God. God sits on his judgment throne and issues a verdict regarding the elect sinner. It is very moving that justification is a declaration by this great judge because when God speaks, he always speaks the truth. God can never speak a lie. He can never speak a half-truth or a partial truth. God always speaks the truth. Therefore, the declaration that he makes regarding elect sinners in justification is a true declaration. God is not declaring the way he *wishes* things were; God is not declaring the way things *could be*, if only the sinner would meet God halfway. When God declares the elect sinner righteous, God is declaring the absolute truth. He is declaring the reality of things.

That is very personal. When God declares you righteous, he is speaking the truth about you. He is saying that you measure up to his own righteousness by his own declaration. That makes the whole matter of justification an awesome thing, a profound thing, and a very glad thing.

Another reason that justification's being a declaration is so profound is that when God makes a declaration, he speaks according to absolute justice. When God makes a declaration about the righteousness of his elect people in Christ, he is not denying his justice or setting his justice aside, but he is maintaining his justice. When he says to you, "You are righteous," God is making that declaration according to the strictest possible standard of righteousness: his own self, his own holy being, which can never waver, which can never be false or unjust. God's declaration is according to strictest justice. And that is such a comfort to God's people because that means that when God justifies the sinner, when he declares you righteous, he can never go back on that. There is nothing in the world, including yourself and your sin, that can make God turn from your justification. His declaration of your justification is according to strictest justice; and that means that if God would turn from that declaration, he would be denying himself, denying his own righteous standard, denying his own justice. That can never happen. The truth of justification as a declaration means that God speaks according to perfectly strict justice.

That is the *declaration* part of our definition: justification is God's declaration that the elect sinner is righteous for Jesus' sake.

The second part of the definition has to do with the elect sinner. Justification is God's declaration regarding the elect sinner. That sinner is elect. Justification is a declaration that God makes about those whom he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, according to Romans 8:29–30. God from all eternity has chosen his people in Christ, so that from all eternity those people are before him as perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ.

As we live our lives in this world, we sin. We have fallen into sin in Adam, and we commit many sins day by day. What we have done and what we have contributed to our justification is only sin. We did not contribute some goodness that God originally looked upon in order to choose us. We did not do any good works that

could contribute to our righteousness. All that we contribute to our justification is sin, which is to say, we do not contribute anything to our righteousness before God. The declaration that God makes concerning his elect people in Christ is not a declaration that they in themselves have done right or are right, but it is a declaration that these who are sinners are nevertheless righteous for the sake of another.

Coming to the third part of our definition—justification is God’s declaration that the elect sinner is righteous for Jesus’ sake—we have that concept of *righteous*. That is a truth that is so high that to all eternity we will still be learning and comprehending that truth. When we speak of righteousness, we do not speak merely of conformity to some external standard. Sometimes the word *righteous* is used that way. If a man conforms himself to the external standard of the law of the land, then he is righteous with regard to that law of the land; he measures up to that law. But when we speak of the righteousness of justification, we are speaking of the righteousness of Jehovah God himself. God is a perfectly holy being. Everything that God does is in perfect conformity with his own being. There is nothing that God says, thinks, or does that contradicts himself. And if we consider for a moment who God is as a consuming fire of holiness, as the thrice-holy God, before whom even the angels cry out day and night, “Holy, holy, holy,” then that matter of being conformed to God is very profound. God burns with a constant, consuming love for himself. The Father burns with a consuming love for the Son in the Spirit and the Son for the Father in the Spirit. Everything that God does is in perfect harmony with that holiness of his being, with his perfect consecration to himself. When we speak of our righteousness, it is God’s righteousness that we are speaking about because this declaration that God makes regarding the elect sinner is not merely this: God measures up to his own holy being. But his declaration is this: *you* measure up to his holy being. You measure up to the standard of what is right before the face of God. Not that the creature is equal to the creator. That can

never be. But you are just as right before the eyes of God as God himself is. The gospel is the astounding revelation that you measure up to God with the very righteousness of God. Now, who can comprehend that? Who can understand that in all of its fullness? That is such a wonderful thing.

Fourth in our definition—God’s declaration that the elect sinner is righteous for Jesus’ sake—is *for Jesus’ sake*. The elect sinner is not declared righteous for anything that the sinner has done or is, but the elect sinner is declared righteous for what Jesus has done. And you can speak of that in two respects. First, there is Jesus’ perfect work of atonement. Jesus took upon himself all the sin of the elect sinners—every violation of God’s law, every guilt of our original sin, and all the guilt of our actual sin—so that when Christ stood before God on the cross, Christ stood before God as guilty and condemned. That was the significance of the cross. It was an accursed death, for the curse of our sins was upon Christ. And remember, when God declares, he speaks truly, and he speaks absolutely justly. It was *true* that Jesus was guilty and Jesus must be condemned—not for anything in him but for what was in us. Standing in our place under the curse of God, Jesus bore that curse in its full measure. He drank the whole cup of God’s wrath down to its dregs. He emptied it. There is no drop of that curse left to be poured out yet upon the heads of God’s people. Christ paid for our sins by his atonement.

That truth of the forgiveness of sins or the atonement that Christ made in justification is glorious and comforting to the child of God. Not one of your sins that you have committed, that you still struggle against, that you fall into can bring God’s curse on your head. That curse has been entirely borne by Jesus Christ.

And then the second respect in which we speak of *for Jesus’ sake* is Jesus’ perfect obedience to God’s law. Not only did Jesus bear the curse of God against our sins, but Jesus took hold of God’s law and obeyed it fully and perfectly in its smallest detail. He obeyed that law

with a perfect heart. Never was there in his heart dissatisfaction with the law of God, but his cry from the beginning to the end of his life was, “Oh, how love I thy law.” It was Jesus’ meat to do his Father’s will. All he lived for was to obey God. With all his being he served God. Jesus obeyed the law perfectly in all its respects. In justification God’s declaration that you are righteous is a declaration that all that obedience of Christ counts for you.

That is such a liberating doctrine for the child of God because it means that all your obedience to the law is finished already. As far as obedience unto salvation, that is all finished. There is no obedience unto salvation that you must render. What weakness do you yet find in your obedience? Is it fervency of spirit in God’s house? Is it prayer? Is it reading God’s word faithfully? Is it love of your neighbor? Is it honor for God? What is it that you find yourself weak in? You don’t have to do it to be saved. All your obedience to that part of the law of God is finished. And that goes for every aspect of the law. Christ accomplished it all. God’s declaration regarding his people in Christ is that what Christ did counts for you. The answer to your conscience, troubled over your lack of prayer or imperfect worship or gross sin, is that Christ prayed well enough and worshiped well enough and did all things perfectly. That is the blessed answer of faith to your conscience regarding all your sins and sinfulness: Christ obeyed the law in my place.

The obedience to the law that we render to God is gratitude—you could even say mere gratitude. Our obedience to the law is not to obtain or earn anything. Christ fully accomplished the law.

That is justification: God’s declaration that the elect sinner is righteous for Jesus’ sake.

### **Justification by Faith**

This justification is *by faith*. When we say, “Justified by faith,” with that word *by* we are speaking of the instrument of our justification. We are speaking of the means by which that justification becomes ours. There is an instrument, and that instrument is faith. We could also speak

of the instruments by which God declares our righteousness to us. The preaching of the gospel is a means that God uses to declare to us our righteousness. The sacraments are instruments that God uses to confirm to us our righteousness. But when we speak of justification by faith, we are speaking of that instrument of receiving, that instrument by which we take hold of and have the righteousness of Jesus Christ for ourselves. And that instrument is faith: justified by faith.

Faith is the perfect and appropriate instrument to receive the righteousness of Christ. Faith is, in its essence, union with Christ, the bond by which we are one with him. He is the head; we are the members of the body; and the body is united to the head by faith. He is the bridegroom; we are the members of the bride; and the bride is united to the bridegroom by faith. He is the vine; we are the branches; and the branches are united to the vine by faith. The union of God’s people to Jesus Christ is faith, so that what is true of him is true of us, and what is true of us is true of him. That is how God can declare Christ to be guilty for our sins: because there is an essential union between Christ and his people. And that is how God can declare you to be righteous for Jesus’ sake: because you are really, truly united to Jesus. The real union between Jesus Christ and his people is faith.

That faith comes to expression in knowledge and confidence. The branches are aware of the vine. And that awareness of the vine is their faith. The union by which God’s people are engrafted into Christ and one with him comes to conscious expression. And the expression of that faith in the heart of the child of God is that he knows something: he knows Christ. And he is confident of something, or he trusts something: he trusts Christ.

The significance of faith, then, is found entirely in its object. And this is where so many attacks are made against justification by faith because faith is made to be significant for its *subject*, the one who believes, so that all the weight of that union rests on the branches or on

the members of the body. *You believe, you know, you trust, you are confident.* That is never the significance of faith. The meaning of faith is always the object, always the vine, always the head. And all of faith's knowing is simply knowing the head, and all of faith's trusting is simply trusting the head. The significance of faith is entirely the object of faith.

That means that when we speak of justification by faith, we are speaking of an utterly passive faith—a passive righteousness by a passive faith. And don't be confused by the fact that faith can be described as activities—*knowing or trusting or abiding or coming or eating or entering* or all of the other action words the Bible uses for faith. The meaning of all those actions is simply the object of faith, so that faith, even as an active faith, is an utterly passive thing. All it does is receive something of another, and it doesn't give anything of itself.

Justified by faith. You know your righteousness in Christ; and you believe it, you trust it, you are confident of it by faith in Jesus Christ. You receive it by faith.

### By Faith Alone

Justified by faith *alone*. There is nothing other than faith that receives this righteousness of Christ. *Alone* is meant to exclude all other things from receiving the righteousness of Christ. You may not bring into justification anything other than faith. You may not bring into justification love. Love is not the instrument of justification. You are not justified by love. You may not bring into justification repenting. You are not justified by repenting. You may not bring into justification your obedience. You are not justified by your obedience. The only thing that may be in justification is faith. And why? Because the only thing that is your righteousness before God is Christ. You mayn't come into that. I mayn't come into that. Your works, your love, your repenting, your anything may not come into that. The only righteousness which can stand before the tribunal of God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The *solas* of the Reformation are meant to emphasize this and guard this truth of justification by faith alone. In fact, one of the *solas* is *by faith alone*. Another *sola* is *by grace alone*. You are justified and saved by grace alone and not by your merit or your obeying or your repenting or anything else. *To the glory of God alone*—there is nothing of man that may come in to his justification, lest the glory go to man and not to God. And justified and saved *by Christ alone* because Christ's righteousness and all his perfect work alone is our salvation.

Repentance does not come into justification. Obedience does not come into justification. Love does not come into justification. Repentance comes *out of* justification. Love comes *out of* justification. Obedience comes *out of* justification. They are the fruits, the effects—the sure fruits, the sure effects. But they may not be brought into justification as the means or instruments of justification.

All of this is the clear and unmistakable teaching of the word of God and the confessions. Romans 3:28, which we read: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Galatians 2:16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

That is the teaching of our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 23.

### Q. 59. What doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?

A. That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life.

### Q. 60. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil;

notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

#### Q. 61. Why sayest thou that thou art righteous by faith only?

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

That is also the teaching of the Belgic Confession in articles 22 and 23. You will notice in those articles, as well as in the scriptures on which they are based, that there is no mention of any work of the sinner—no mention of his obedience, his love, or his repenting—as the means of his justification. There is only this, that he is justified by faith. And when the scriptures, and the confessions on the basis of those scriptures, bring up works, it is to exclude them entirely from the means of justification. We are justified by faith alone without any work of the law or obedience to the law or love according to the law. We are justified before God and righteous before God for Jesus' sake alone, received by faith alone.

#### Justification by Faith Alone under Attack

This is the doctrine that remains under attack; and we remain under attack for our confession of this doctrine, especially for our denial that we are forgiven our sins in the way of repenting. The latest writings by Professor Engelsma teach the doctrine of justification by repentance. The

truth of the word of God is justification by faith alone. The teaching of justification that finds acceptance in the Protestant Reformed Churches and by now has been thoroughly imbibed in the Protestant Reformed Churches is justification by repentance.

That we are dealing with the means of justification is evident in Professor Engelsma's writings. This is the way the July 29 letter begins:

Dear -----(Member of the RP Movement),

“In the way of” is the perfectly acceptable, and best possible, expression of the biblical teaching that God works through means, that He uses means to save us, and that in His saving work He works in a certain manner. “In the way of” is true in everyday life. God sustains your life and provides you with the strength to carry on your life and your work “in the way of” feeding you and “in the way of” the natural processes of your body. God restores you to health after sickness “in the way of” doctors, medicines, and surgery. What numbskull is so orthodox and so fearful of denying the hand of God in all this that he denies “in the way of”?<sup>2</sup>

There it is made clear that we are dealing with the means or the instrument of salvation. The language that is used is *in the way of*, and that constantly appears in quotation marks. The whole point of the article is to teach forgiveness of sins *in the way of* repentance. At the beginning it is established that *in the way of* means *means* or *instrument*. And the illustrations that are given highlight that. Food is the instrument or the means by which God sustains your body, and medicine is the instrument or the means by which God heals your body. We are dealing here with a doctrine of the instrument, a doctrine of the means. And there is only one means of salvation. There *may* only be one means. That means is *faith alone*. And if salvation is not by

<sup>2</sup> David J. Engelsma, “‘In the Way of’: Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC),” posted on Facebook July 29, 2023. All quotations of Professor Engelsma in this article are from this Facebook post.

faith alone, then it is not by grace alone anymore. If anything else is brought into the position of means, then we do not have salvation by grace but salvation by some kind of working and some kind of merit. Very clearly, according to our opponent, we are dealing with means.

The document goes on to call denying *in the way of* a heresy.

The heresy of denying “in the way of” is evident in all its falsity and in all its seriousness especially in the denial that God forgives “in the way of” our repenting. You know better. You know that He forgives in the way of repentance from experience.

And then a quotation, with some comments, from the psalms:

“Make me to hear [in the Word of pardon—DJE] joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken [which is the experience of repentance—DJE] may rejoice.”

Apart from the dubious (at best) exegesis of that psalm is the teaching that you are forgiven in the way of repenting—which means you are forgiven your sins by means of your repenting. And anything else, according to the author, is a heresy.

Here is another quotation from the Facebook post:

To deny this “in the way of” is not merely to err; it is to contradict the Christian gospel. It is to assure sinners that they can safely go on sinning, and yet have forgiveness.

This is clearly the teaching—although it is spiritually a very murky and muddled teaching—of forgiveness or justification by repenting.

This error involves several confusions. Professor Engelsma has confused several concepts

that lead him to teach justification by repenting. First, there is the confusion of repenting and believing. The professor continues to insist that repenting *is* believing, and believing *is* repenting. The professor’s confusion is not merely a slip, where he means to say one thing and accidentally says another. This has been his constant doctrine for the last two years. His constant doctrine is that repenting—which is your activity of feeling sorry for your sins, your activity of turning away from your sins, your activity of hating your sins, and your activity of loving God instead of your sins—is believing.

When the professor confuses repenting and believing, he involves himself in the error of the federal vision. Here is Norman Shepherd’s doctrine regarding believing and repenting or, in Norman Shepherd’s words, faith and repentance.

Faith and repentance are so inextricably intertwined with each other that there cannot exist a true and saving apprehension of the mercy of Christ without a grief for and hatred of sin, a turning unto God, and a purposing and endeavoring to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments (West. Conf. of Faith XV, 2). (Thesis 13)

Repentance, inclusive not only of grief for and hatred of sin but also of turning from sin and endeavoring to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments, although not the ground of forgiveness, is nevertheless so necessary for all sinners, that there is no pardon without it (West. Conf. of Faith XV, 3). (Thesis 14)

The forgiveness of sin for which repentance is an indispensable necessity is the forgiveness of sin included in justification, and therefore there is no justification without repentance. (Thesis 15)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Norman Shepherd, *Thirty-four Theses on Justification in Relation to Faith, Repentance, and Good Works*, <https://pastor.trinity-pres.net/essays/ns13-1978-11-18NSLetterToThePresbyteryOfPhiladelphia34ThesesOnJustification.pdf>. These theses were presented to the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on November 18, 1978.

That theology of Norman Shepherd is the theology of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the teaching of Professor Engelsma. It is the teaching that you are forgiven by means of your repenting and that you do not receive the benefit of justification, the comfort of justification, and the knowledge of righteousness until you have done your repenting.

When Professor Engelsma goes on to assert that any teaching that leaves repentance out of the instrument of justification is not Christian, Professor Engelsma entangles himself in the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed faith teaches that justification (including the forgiveness of sins) is by faith alone. *By faith alone* rules out repentance as an instrument of forgiveness. But Professor Engelsma includes repentance as the means of forgiveness, and the professor damns the denial of this doctrine as heresy.

The heresy of denying “in the way of” is evident in all its falsity and in all its seriousness especially in the denial that God forgives “in the way of” our repenting. You know better. You know that He forgives in the way of repentance from experience.

By damning *by faith alone* as heresy, Professor Engelsma commits himself to the Roman Catholic damnation of the Reformed faith. Canon 14 of the Roman Catholic anathemas of Trent reads,

If anyone saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema.<sup>4</sup>

Rome there damns the idea that justification is by faith alone and calls down a curse of God

upon anyone who teaches so. Professor Engelsma calls down an anathema upon the heads of anyone who would deny that forgiveness is by means of repentance.

The seriousness of this error is that it is a loss of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not teach Christ *and* the sinner for the sinner’s salvation. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches Christ *alone* for the sinner’s salvation. And because Christ alone is the sinner’s salvation, justification and all salvation is by faith alone.

The seriousness of this error is also that it results in the loss of souls. Men perish for justification by repentance. That is not my private judgment but the judgment of the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:16. “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Anyone who believes what Professor Engelsma is teaching, that forgiveness is by repentance, is not justified. That is an astounding statement of the apostle. God will not have anyone who believes that salvation is by repentance to be justified because that person robs God of his glory. God has made salvation to be by faith alone in order to show that salvation is by grace alone, for then all of the glory belongs to God alone. Any sinner who puts himself in the place of Christ, according to the apostle, is not justified. Justification is not by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ.

### Gracious Deliverance

This whole matter highlights for us the grace of God in giving this gospel of justification by faith alone to Remnant Reformed Church. This doctrine remains under attack and will remain under attack until the Lord Jesus Christ returns. There will never be a letup on Satan’s assault against justification by faith alone, for this is the doctrine that gives God all the glory for salvation. This is the doctrine that shows that salvation is by grace. And, therefore, Satan will continue attacking it. Our own flesh will as well. This highlights to us the grace of God in giving to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, in giving

<sup>4</sup> General Council of Trent, Sixth Session, On Justification, Canon 14, [http://traditionalcatholic.net/Tradition/Council/Trent/Sixth\\_Session\\_Canons.html](http://traditionalcatholic.net/Tradition/Council/Trent/Sixth_Session_Canons.html).

to us the gift of faith, and in giving this glorious gospel of justification by faith alone for our comfort.

The fruit of the gospel of justification by faith alone is that the child of God goes down to his house justified. In his own experience, in his own life, in his own knowledge he knows the

righteousness of Christ to be his. He goes home happy, and he goes home thankful, determined to work, to love, to repent, to obey—not *unto* justification but *because* he has been freely justified for the sake of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for this gospel and his salvation.

—AL

## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

*The Banner*

January 30, 1919

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### Article XIX. Mankind's Relation to the Fallen King (continued), Pseudo-Calvinism (continued), and The Mote and the Beam

#### A. MANKIND'S RELATION TO THE FALLEN KING

In our discussion on the relation of mankind to Adam we found that in the first place it must be considered a judicial one. Not first of all a physical relationship, but first a judicial connection exists between Adam and us. He is not first our father but first our head. He was the head of the covenant of works, and as such he was our head, officially representing us according to the righteous judgment of the Almighty. And because of this relation the guilt of Adam is first of all imputed to all his posterity. It is, therefore, not a mere matter of inheritance, so that regardless of the justice or injustice of the thing we should simply inherit sin and death with a certain fatal necessity, but it is principally a matter of imputation, so that according to the sentence of an absolutely righteous God we are guilty of the sin Adam committed as our covenant head. Not the pollution or defilement is first, but the guilt of sin lies at the bottom of all our misery. Even as in the case of our salvation justification (the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us) is first and not sanctification, so in our misery and condemnation the imputation of guilt is first, while defilement and corruption follow as the punishment of our guilt.

Shall we regard this truth as an established fact now, reader? Shall we accept this truth, this tremendous truth of the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity, and make it part and parcel of our real and living faith?

I consider it one of the most important, one of the most basic truths of our entire faith, to maintain that God is righteous when He imputes the guilt of Adam to us. To deny it is to deny salvation in Christ at the same time. For the one is dependent on the other. And, therefore, as a reformed people especially we must understand this tremendous principle of imputation clearly and accept it by a true and living faith. Be not deceived by anyone, who would have you believe that this is nothing but dry philosophy and human imagination. I know it, there are those who make light of doctrine, openly or more secretly make it the object of their scorn. Exactly in the measure they do so they are for the church wolves in sheepskin, who by depriving the church of Christ of the full light of truth would lead her astray. Be not deceived by them, but firmly cling to the word of truth as revealed in Scripture!

But now we must discuss one more question in connection with this law of imputation. The

question is namely: **how** is this guilt of Adam imputed to us and what is the relation between this guilt and our actual defilement? I mentioned in a former article, that the reformed people generally believed in the doctrine of creationism, the doctrine, namely, that the soul in case of each individual is created as soon as the human being is formed in the womb. They held this especially over against the view of traducianism, which holds that the soul as the body is brought forth by the parents. Both views appealed to Scripture for support, and in general it may be admitted that there is but very little direct proof in the Word of God for either conception. For various reasons, however, people of reformed persuasion held to the view of creationism, and believed that in case of each human being the soul was especially created. It is possible, however, to restate this view of creationism in just a slightly different form, and to say: In case of each human individual the parents bring forth a **human nature**, but the **person** comes from God. The person is created, the nature is born. The human nature, therefore, is perpetuated thru conception and birth, but in the case of every human individual the human person is inserted by the Almighty.

It seems to me we have a rather strong proof of this view in the fact of the Incarnation, the Word become flesh. Who is Christ? He is the Person of the Son of God, the Eternal Word. He is not a human **person**, but only a divine. But this Person of the Son of God enters into human nature, assumes human flesh and blood, a human soul and a human body. He assumes no human person, but merely a human nature. So that after His incarnation He is the Person of the Son with a divine and a human nature in unity of person. Now, then, what we wish to point out is this, that in case of Christ, at least, the Person comes from God, while only the nature is brought forth by the virgin Mary. You say, this is an exceptional case, and we have no right to generalize this grandest of exceptions? And we admit, there is truth in that assertion. And yet, if we bear in mind, that back of the Incarnation and the creation of mankind stands the all-comprehensive

and all-wise decree of God we have more right to generalize than may be admitted at first sight. For in the light of God's plan you come to this conclusion that the creation of human organism was such as to be adapted to the Incarnation. God created man with a view to the Incarnation of the Son. The Incarnation is not an afterthought of God, but was in His mind when he formed the human race. In His eternal wisdom He created the human organism in such a way as to make the Incarnation possible. And if this is true, then we may also generalize the fact that becomes so plainly evident in the coming of Christ in the flesh, namely, that only the nature is brought forth by man, while the person comes from God. And, therefore, we believe that the view of Creationism ought to be restated in this form. Not a person, but a nature is brought forth by man, and into this human nature a person is inserted in case of every human individual by the Almighty.

Now, then, what is the relation? It is the **person** of every human individual that stands in a judicial relationship to Adam, the head of the covenant of works. Even though the person is created by God in case of every human being individually, the fact remains, that according to the righteous judgment of God there exists a covenant relationship, a judicial and ethical tie, which binds the person to Adam, the first Father. And because of this same covenant-relation between the person of every human individual and the head of the covenant, the guilt of Adam is imputed to every person, so that every person becomes guilty by reason of this imputation. And the person being guilty every human individual is worthy of the punishment of death, is worthy of receiving a sinful human nature. This sinful human nature every individual receives by birth from Adam as his first father, and thus he becomes polluted and defiled, incapable of doing any good and prone to all evil.

Let me recapitulate. The person of every human being comes from God. Because of our judicial relation to Adam that person is guilty thru God's righteous imputation. The person

being guilty is worth of punishment. And this punishment is received thru birth in a sinful human nature, in a state of spiritual death.

If this view is accepted, we can also grasp how it is that Christ, though born from man, is nevertheless sinless. For what is the truth? This, that Christ is no human person. As person He is only divine. And, therefore, He does not fall under the covenant of works, is not guilty of the sin of Adam committed in paradise. Of all the sons of men, He is the only exception in this respect. The guilt of Adam cannot be imputed to Him, for the simple reason that He is the Person of the Son of God. And since the guilt of mankind cannot be imputed to Him by reason of His standing outside of the covenant of works as such, he is not worthy of condemnation, is not worthy of death, may not receive a sinful human nature, and the sinless human nature is given Him thru His conception of the Holy Spirit.

But then we can also understand, how of all men, only this personally sinless One, could freely enter into our state, assume our guilt, receive our punishment, that we might be made righteousness of God in Him!

## B. PSEUDO-CALVINISM

I stated that if we followed the direction in which Pseudo-Calvinism would lead us we would land right in the midst of the world, just because it evidently does not distinguish between “world” in the good and “world” in the evil sense of the word. It condemns the tendency to despise the world, warns against the danger of glorying in the world, and admonishes that we shall not separate ourselves from the world. But the trouble seems to be that it does not define very definitely what it means by “the world.” And yet, this is so absolutely necessary! How would we otherwise explain the tremendous contrast between the words of John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” and on the other hand the prayer of Jesus: “I pray not for the world”? And besides, if we do not distinguish between these two on the basis of Scripture, how shall we,

afraid to be separatistic in the bad sense, keep ourselves free from the defilement of the world and avoid amalgamation and apostasy?

But I promise to point to a practical illustration of this phase of Pseudo-Calvinism as furnished by its attitude against Christian Instruction, particularly over against the Christian Primary School. Its ideal is to keep and support and send our children to the Public School as a rule, and to make the Free Christian School the exception. And it registers its protest against the Christian School movement as being separatistic.

Let us see what is implied in this judgment upon our free schools. We believe that the duty of educating the children rests upon the parents. The parents are responsible to God for them, for they are His children, and primarily He gave them these children for the realization of His covenant. The state may be interested that our children are properly educated, may demand that they shall be duly instructed, so that they may become worthy citizens; the state, therefore, holds the right of supervision, may see to it that nothing is taught against the principles of good government, may even compel the parents to have their children educated wherever they show themselves negligent in this respect. But it does not belong to the duties of the state to educate our children. And, therefore, in opposition to what Pseudo-Calvinism would advocate in this respect we maintain as our ideal: the free school as a rule and the state as the exception.

Is this free school separatistic in spirit or aim? Let us investigate. It gives instruction in all the branches taught in any primary school, the only difference being an occasional departure, as for instance in regard to dancing. For the rest it teaches all the branches of instruction necessary to prepare the child for life in this world in regard to every sphere. It gives instruction in the three R's, American History, Civil Government, in fact, in whatever branches are to be taught in any primary school. True, in addition it also offers instruction, daily instruction in history as revealed in Scripture and even in truths of the

Bible. In this respect distinct. But where is the “separatism”?

Again, they are no Dutch Schools. True, many of them still teach the Holland language as a branch. But what of it? The ideal is to prepare our children to be true and faithful citizens of our own country, and though sometimes Holland is taught as a branch, the medium of instruction is our own American language. Where is the separatism?

Once more, they do not close their doors to any children, but are willing to receive children from any denomination. We do not mean to make them exclusively “christian reformed schools.” Not at all. Especially the co-operation of the Reformed Brethren we repeatedly invite. They are not separatistic in this respect.

In fact, the only distinctive feature about them is, that they prefer to base their instruction on the positive principles of the Word of God. We refuse to admit that the state must educate our children. We refuse to admit the possibility of uniting ourselves with the world at large, and have our children educated according to the principles of the world.

The free christian school does not stand for anabaptistic separation from the world (in the good sense of the term) but for the thoroughly scriptural principle of separation from the world in its evil sense. And it is against this latter principle that Pseudo-Calvinism militates.

### C. THE MOTE AND THE BEAM

I was not at all surprised, of course, to notice that the “Journal” was not particularly pleased with some of my recent articles. That was to be expected. I confess, however, that I was somewhat surprised because of the nature and form of the reply it published. Mr. Eerdmans’ criticism I will not answer in detail for the simple reason that I can afford to let anyone judge of its value and weight of argument. The brother thinks that principles come from the Netherlands, and bases his argument on a single expression of an occasional visitor of our country, and particularly on conditions in Urk!!! Be assured, brother, that I do not intend to introduce conditions of the Netherlands in our own country, still less to make Urk our model!

There is, however, one accusation in Mr. B. K. K.’s criticism to which I will reply. The brother brings the indictment that I judge of a person’s motives, when I say that the publisher of a certain article and the publisher of “Maranatha” are identical. I would return this indictment to his own address. I simply stated a fact, nothing else. And if the statement is in need of explanation, I would say, that to my mind the fact that the publisher of “Maranatha” recommends the article of Rev. Van der Werf naturally depreciates the values of the recommendation.

It is Mr. B. K. K. who judges of motives, not I. The old story of the beam and the mote.

—Holland, Mich.



REFORMED  
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