



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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*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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MEDITATION

And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: and they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

—Exodus 5:20–23

All hope of deliverance had left the hearts of the people of Israel.

Moses and Aaron saw Israel's hopelessness firsthand as they stood in the road near Pharaoh's palace. Just leaving Pharaoh's house were the Israelite officers who had come to appeal to Pharaoh against the cruel treatment of Pharaoh's taskmasters. The Israelite officers had suffered brutal beatings from the taskmasters. Their backs may still have been bleeding and their limbs still bruised. But all they had gotten from Pharaoh were lies and false accusations and hard words and hatred. Now they met Moses and Aaron standing in the way, and the officers of the children of Israel cried out against Moses and Aaron in their hopelessness. It was as if the officers said, "We are dying under Pharaoh! And all that you two have done is make our suffering worse! Pharaoh hates us. Pharaoh's servants hate us. We stink in their nostrils. And it is all your fault! The Lord look upon you and judge!"

What a far cry from the day, not that long before, when "the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Ex. 4:31).

Now the children of Israel saw the effect of Moses' talking to Pharaoh. Now their faith was being tested in the welts on their flesh and the

cracks in their bones. It was too much for the hearts of the children of Israel. Deliverance was impossible! Pharaoh was too strong! Hope fled, and despair settled in.

Moses returned unto the Lord bewildered. What was happening? What was God doing? What had all of the preparation been for? What had all of the signs been for? What had all of the speeches been for? What had happened to God's promise? Had God forgotten his people? Had God forgotten his mercy? "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

But thus it always is with God's deliverance of his church. God does not operate according to the timing or the expectations of man. God delivers his church his own way, according to his own good pleasure. God delivers his church when man can only conclude that all is lost. God brings matters to the point that man finds deliverance impossible and that man can see no hope, for then all that is left is the sheer power and wisdom and good pleasure of God. And thanks be to God that it is so! For what man could ever imagine the cross of God's beloved Son? How high are God's thoughts! How unsearchable is his wisdom! How past finding out are his ways!

All hope of deliverance had left the hearts of the people of Israel. But known unto God were all the ways of his own heart. Against the

hopelessness and bewilderment of man, God's promise stood—and stands—secure.

—AL

FAQ

I have been asked if singing psalms is a good work. (Yes, singing psalms is in obedience to God's command, like every good work is.) And singing the psalms is a means of grace? (Yes.) So now your good works are a means of grace? (No, but I don't know how to explain that.)

Answer: The issue in the line of questioning above is whether the congregational singing of psalms is a means of grace to the members of the congregation. On the basis of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, Remnant Reformed Church teaches that congregational psalm singing in the worship of the church is a means of grace to the members of the congregation. The Reformed Protestant Churches, however, deny that congregational psalm singing is a means of grace to the church and insist instead that the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are the only means of grace whatsoever to the church.

The line of questioning above is intended to refute Remnant Reformed Church's doctrine that psalm singing is a means of grace. The questions are being asked by an opponent of exclusive psalmody, while the answers in parentheses are being given by a proponent of exclusive psalmody. The design of the anti-exclusive-psalmodist is to prove that the exclusive-psalmodist makes the believer's good work of psalm singing to be more than a fruit of salvation and to be *unto* salvation. The anti-exclusive-psalmodist digs a pit and spreads a net of works-righteousness that he intends for the exclusive-psalmodist to fall into. His line of leading questions is intended to funnel the exclusive-psalmodist step by step into the accusation of works-righteousness.

Leading question to the exclusive-psalmodist: Is singing psalms a good work?

Exclusive-psalmodist's answer: Yes, singing psalms is in obedience to God's command, like every good work is.

Leading question to the exclusive-psalmodist: Is singing psalms a means of grace?

Exclusive-psalmodist's answer: Yes.

Accusation against the exclusive-psalmodist: So now your good works are a means of grace?

The trap is sprung with the *Gotcha!* question, so now your good works are a means of grace?! The implication of the *Gotcha!* is that the exclusive-psalmodist makes man's works contribute to man's salvation. In reality the exclusive-psalmodist has done no such thing. The exclusive-psalmodist does not sing psalms *unto* his salvation but *because* of his salvation. But how to explain all this? Because the exclusive-psalmodist understands that the anti-exclusive-psalmodist is accusing him of making good works to be *unto* salvation, he denies the accusation: no.

The first thing to do in answering the anti-exclusive-psalmodist is to expose his line of questioning as nothing but a trap. The line of questioning above is not a serious attempt to learn how psalm singing functions in the congregation. Rather, the line of questioning above is only a pit that is dug, a snare that is set, a net that is spread to entrap the exclusive-psalmodist and to score a charge of works-righteousness against exclusive psalmody.

The line of questioning can be exposed as nothing but a trap by turning the line of questioning back on the anti-exclusive-psalmodist regarding other means of grace.

Leading question to the anti-exclusive-psalmodist: Are the preaching of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments good works?

Anti-exclusive-psalmodist's answer: Yes, preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments are obedience to God's commands.

Leading question to the anti-exclusive-psalmodist: Are the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments means of grace?

Anti-exclusive-psalmodist's answer: Yes.

Accusation against the anti-exclusive-psalmodist: So now your good works are a means of grace?

When the line of questioning is applied to preaching and the sacraments, the anti-exclusive-psalmodist must fall into his own pit that he has dug for God's people. If the anti-exclusive-psalmodist insists on accusing exclusive psalmody of works-righteousness, then he must also accuse himself of works-righteousness. All the charges that he intended to score against exclusive psalmody he has actually scored against himself.

The second thing to do in answering the anti-exclusive-psalmodist is to clarify for him how it is that faithfully preaching the gospel, properly administering the sacraments, and singing the psalms in public worship are means of grace for the church. In the line of questioning above, the anti-exclusive-psalmodist makes the significance of psalm singing to be psalm *singing*. All the emphasis is on the activity of psalm singing, the good work of psalm singing, the obedience of psalm singing. The very first leading question is meant to reduce psalm singing to nothing but a good work. By his first question the anti-exclusive-psalmodist has

already taken away the power of psalm singing as a means of grace by only allowing psalm singing to be discussed as a good work.

What the anti-exclusive-psalmodist overlooks is that, when it comes to the means of grace, the significance of psalm singing is not the fact that psalm singing is obedience or activity or working. Rather, the significance of psalm singing as a means of grace is *psalm* singing. The psalms are God's means of grace to his people. The content of the psalms is Jesus Christ crucified and risen, for Jesus fulfilled all things "which were written...in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). The singer of the psalms is Jesus Christ, for Christ is "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1). Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the psalms, the beginning and the ending, for Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1:1 and the revelation of the praise of Jehovah of Psalm 150:6. As Jesus' word and as the revelation of Jesus Christ, the psalms are God's means of grace to the church. By the psalms God saves his people, instructs his people, admonishes his people, comforts his people, renews his people. The psalms are God's means to open the windows of heaven and pour out upon his people all the riches of his grace. In short, the psalms are a means of grace.

How does God minister this means of grace that is the psalms to his people? God administers this means of grace through the office of believer. The believer is a prophet, who confesses God's name and speaks God's word on behalf of God. The believer is a priest, who offers himself to God as a living sacrifice of thanksgiving. The believer is a king, who fights against sin and Satan in this life and afterward shall reign forever with Christ (see Lord's Day 12). The believer holds the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king by virtue of God's anointing him to the office of believer. God unites his people to Christ by faith. God anoints his people with the Spirit of Christ. God confers upon his people the office of believer, so that they are his representatives in the world. God puts the songs of Christ into the mouths of Christ's Christians. And God

proclaims the psalms to his people through the mouths of his official heralds in the office of believer. By the singing of the psalms, believers mutually teach their fellow believers. By the singing of the psalms, believers mutually admonish their fellow believers. The psalm singing of God's believer-prophets is a means of grace in God's hand to bless and edify his people. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

The fact that God ministers his grace to his people through the psalm singing of the office of believer does not turn God's grace into man's work. The psalms are God's psalms. The office of believer is God's office. When God proclaims his word through his appointed servants, all the power and efficacy of the proclamation is God's.

This is how all the means of grace work, as even the anti-exclusive-psalmodist must confess. For example, the preaching of the gospel is God's means of grace to his people because the gospel is God's word and the minister is God's appointed servant. It is true that one could call the preaching of the gospel and the hearing of the gospel a good work that the minister and the congregation perform in gratitude to God. Paul considered his preaching of the gospel to be his labor (I Cor. 15:10–11). The Heidelberg Catechism lists hearing God's word in church as part of our obedience to the fourth commandment (Lord's Day 38). But it would be spiritual confusion for one to conclude from this that our good works are the power of God's bestowal of his grace.

The key to the means of grace is not man's work, as the anti-exclusive-psalmodist above would have it. Rather, the key to the means of grace is God's word and God's servant. God ministers his word to his church by the servants that he has officially appointed to speak on his behalf. The means of grace must not be construed as the means-of-God's-grace-and-man's-work. Rather, the means of grace are the means of grace.

The third thing to do in answering the anti-exclusive-psalmodist is to instruct him that God does indeed use the good works of his people as a means of grace to his other elect people. The anti-exclusive-psalmodist above thought to score a charge against exclusive psalmody with the *Gotcha!* question, so now your good works are a means of grace??!! The anti-exclusive-psalmodist's charge by his *Gotcha!* was that the exclusive-psalmodist makes a man's works contribute to that man's salvation and blessing. The exclusive-psalmodist above recognized the charge that was being made and so responded *no*. However, the exclusive-psalmodist could respond *yes* to the question, so now your good works are a means of grace??!! Or, more fully, the exclusive-psalmodist could respond, "Yes, the good works that God gives his people are a means that God uses to minister his grace to his other people. Now, I know what you are trying to do with your question. You are trying to make me say that a man's works contribute to that man's salvation. I deny with all my heart that man contributes anything to his salvation. But the actual words of your question are whether man's good works are a means of grace, and the answer to that is a resounding *yes!*"

Our Lord taught that God uses our good works as a means by which he ministers grace and salvation to his other elect people. From Jesus' sermon on the mount: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Jesus' teaching was that our good works—which are the fruit of faith—shine as a light to those who, as yet, do not call God their Father. At the time that they see our good works, they only know God as "your Father," but they do not yet know God as *their* Father. God uses the good works of his people as a light to bring his elect people to glorify him.

The Reformed confessions also teach that God uses our good works as a means by which he ministers grace and salvation to his elect people. In its explanation of the communion of saints, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches "that every

one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members” (Lord’s Day 21, Q&A 55). God ministers salvation to the other members of the church by the members’ employing their gifts for them.

How is it to be explained that God uses man’s good works as a means of grace to his elect people? The significance, power, and efficacy of our good works as means of grace are not to be found in the fact that the good works are man’s works. Rather, their significance, power, and efficacy are to be found in the fact that our good works are God’s works given to his servants. Every good work that the child of God performs has been eternally ordained for him by God (Eph. 2:10). Every good work that the child of God performs has been given to him by God as a gift of God’s grace to him (I Cor. 15:10). God gives the believer every good work as the fruit of faith (Belgic Confession 24). The believer performs every good work by faith, which means that the work is entirely of God and not of man (Heb. 11). And just as with faith, God gives not only the desire to perform the good work, but God gives also the actual performing and doing of the good work (Canons of Dordt 3–4.14; Phil. 2:13). God is the “Author of every good work,” which means that he is the planner, provider, and performer of every good work (Canons 3–4.16). Therefore, when a man performs a good work—with all the labor, effort, diligence, sincerity, strain, care, and desire that goes into that good work—that man does not trace the good work to himself but to God. The constant cry of the good worker is “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I Cor. 15:10). And when men see your good works—with all the sweat, suffering, and sacrifice that obviously went into those good works—they can only trace it to your Father which is in heaven and thus glorify him (Matt. 5:16). In short, our good works are God’s good works. And therefore our good works never proclaim Man but only proclaim God.

These God-prepared, God-given, and God-wrought good works are of no account to the

salvation of the man who does them. The believer does not do good works unto his salvation but because of his salvation. “Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?) nay, we are beholden to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He *that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Belgic Confession 24). The believer places no trust whatsoever in his good works but relies on the merits of the suffering and death of his savior alone. “Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we can do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable” (Belgic Confession 24).

But these God-prepared, God-given, and God-wrought good works are used by God for the blessing and salvation of his other elect people. God uses especially the good works of confessing and applying the word of God to others as his means to bestow grace upon them. God uses the parents’ rearing of their children in the word, the believer’s visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and the members’ speaking the truth in love to their fellow members to bestow grace upon the children, the fatherless and widow, and the members of Christ’s body. Not that man can effect anything for his fellow man. For except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; and except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain (Ps. 127:1). The power and efficacy of every means of grace is God, who ministers his grace to his people through the means that he appoints, to his honor and glory alone. And the child of God who has been so used by God to bestow God’s word and God’s gifts upon his fellow believer ascribes all of the glory to God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. (I Cor. 15:10–11)

What the confessions say about the efficacy of the means of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline is true of all the means that God uses to accomplish the blessing and salvation of

his people: “To [God] alone all the glory, both of means and of their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen” (Canons 3–4.17).

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article XXIII. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

(originally printed as Article XXXII by mistake)

The fall of the king had its effect not only upon himself and his posterity but also upon his kingdom in its various spheres. This was the conclusion we reached last time. We showed, how this effect of man's state and condition upon the world in which he lived and over which he was placed followed with necessity from the relation between the one and the other. Man is not a separate being who stands in no relation to the rest of creation, but all creation is linked together and man is of that world the crown and climax. He is the highest creature, but as such stands in intimate relation to the world in which he received his place. And thru him that world is to reach its highest purpose, thru him God is to receive His glory from that world in the highest sense of the word. And it is because of this most intimate relation between man and the world, that it follows with necessity that his rebellion and fall into death affected the world in all its spheres. But not only does this effect necessarily follow, it also has been plainly revealed in Scripture. This world is not the world God created originally. Suffering and destruction, various upheavals and defect tell us quite the contrary. And the explanation of these facts lies in the brief but pregnant commentary of Gen. 3:17. The creature is in the

bondage of corruption and all creation groans and travails in pain together.

At this stage of the discussion the question is frequently asked: What would have been the result if the power of grace had not immediately entered in to save the king and the kingdom? What would have become of man, what would have become of the world, of God's entire creation if behind the first Adam the second Adam had not stood with the redeeming power of His grace? Questions of this nature are asked more than once, not only in regard to this particular case but in application to other instances as well. What would have been the history of the world, so the inquiry often is, if Adam had not sinned, if he had remained obedient and had resisted the temptation of satan to the very end? Or again, a favorite inquiry is expressed in the question: what would have been the case if Adam had refused to receive the forbidden fruit out of the hand of his wife, so that Eve only had sinned and become worthy of death? And in the same way the question is raised: what would have been the result if no manifestations of grace had followed immediately upon the sin and fall of Adam and Eve?

Though these similar questions may be raised for the sake of argument, for the sake of

elucidating the actual condition of man and the world, yet we should never forget that they remain dangerous questions to ask, and that they are after all quite incapable of receiving a satisfactory answer. In the deepest sense they carry the Reformed Christian back to the eternal counsel of God. We believe in the eternal counsel of God of which all the world and history is after all the realization. That faith in the eternal, all-comprehensive, irresistible counsel of God is not something of minor significance, not something secondary, not something which we officially profess to believe, but about which we would rather maintain a profound silence, but it is the heart of our doctrine, the basis of our entire confession. Neither, let it be remarked in parentheses, is this unqualified acceptance of and belief in the counsel of our Almighty God for a moment to be designated as a sort of determinism. The latter is the doctrine of a certain fatal necessity without wisdom and purpose, without love and feeling, blind and cold and cruel. The former is the belief in the absolutely free and sovereign and omnipotent control of a personal God of infinite wisdom and love. The two, therefore, are never to be confused, are never to be mentioned in the same breath. God's counsel is His decree of eternal and infinite wisdom, holiness, goodness, love. Faith in that counsel is the Christian's assurance, not only that all things exist and develop in the world according to that counsel with divine necessity, that they could not and may not take place in a different way, but also that all things have their purpose and definite end, that nothing is the result of a blind fatalistic force, but all things work together for good. And one can never manifest his imperfect grasp on the Calvinistic faith, or his half-heartedness with respect to our reformed conception more readily than by tampering with this counsel of God or alluding to its unqualified acceptance as a sort of determinism.

It is the unqualified proclamation of this omnipotent counsel of our God, which pervades the revelation of Holy Writ.

It is the unconditional acceptance of this counsel of God which has been truly called the heart of our confession.

It is the emphasis placed again on this doctrine which caused Dr. Kuyper to be an instrument in the hand of God to pour new life-blood into the veins of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

And it is the tampering with this fundamental truth, the failure to preach and understand it in its true significance and with the correct emphasis which is one of the signs of a degenerated Reformed Church. And men who fear to accept, fail to speak of this counsel or refer to its full acceptance as determinism have in principle departed from the Reformed view of God and the world.

But about this counsel of God as such we shall have abundant opportunity to speak in a future connection. What we meant to make plain now is that because of our firm belief in the all-comprehensive counsel of God it is rather impossible to give a satisfactory answer to questions regarding probable results if the course of history, and therefore, the counsel of God had been different. That counsel of the Almighty is a unity. It is dominated by unity of purpose, the glory of God's name. That purpose dominates the entire counsel and all the elements, so to speak, of the plan of God are subordinate to it. For the same reason, however, there is the most sublime harmony, the most harmonious interrelation between the various objects in that counsel of God. And to come to the question we are now considering, according to that plan of the Almighty, creation was from the beginning adapted to the operation of grace. Never should we entertain the thought for a moment as if the work of grace is the manifestation of an afterthought of the Almighty. Never should we give place to the thought that God, after the world with its king fell into sin and death, devised the happy plan of grace to repair a broken and marred creation. On the contrary, God planned the world from all eternity with a view to the operation of grace. Even as we pointed out in a

former connection how the creation in man was such as to be adapted to the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, so we must emphasize in this connection that all the world was planned and made so as to be savable. The world in God's counsel was such as to call for the power of grace to uphold it, the moment it fell into sin, and for that reason it is impossible to adequately answer the question: What would have been the result if the element of grace had not entered in immediately after the fall?

That this is true, is plain from the answer that is most generally given. Granted historical conditions as they actually were. Granted Adam as he actually did exist as king of the world, so intimately related to that world over which he had dominion. Granted the fact of sin, which made him guilty before his God and worthy of death in its most absolute significance. Granted all this and further supposed that there had been no gracious provision on the part of God to reach the glory of His Name through the salvation of this fallen kingdom, so that the power of grace had not operated on the world immediately after the fall of man. What then, would have become of the world and its king? The answer seems rather easy: Adam and Eve would have immediately sunk in the power of eternal death, struck down by the unrestrained wrath of God, and the world would have lapsed into chaos and destruction. King and kingdom would have been subjected to the power of death and corruption in the full sense of the term. This is the answer that seems most natural, that seems at first sight quite satisfactory, and that is most generally given, when the question is raised. And, of course, about the fact as such there can be little room for dispute. The fact that without the grace of God, man and the world would have sunk into the power of death completely is beyond dispute. But the difficulty enters in when it is asserted that this would have taken place immediately after the sin and fall of Adam. It is when this assertion is made that we feel immediately the irrelevant nature of the question and the impossibility of the answer. For it is not true that we can

conceive of the possibility of Adam's immediate and complete destruction, even if you conceive of the absolute absence of the power and operation of God's grace.

This would be possible if you conceive of Adam as an individual apart from the human race, separate from his posterity. But the fact is, as we have developed in our previous articles that Adam was not a mere human individual, neither did he sin as an individual. He was the head of the human race in covenant relation to God. As such his sin is the sin of all his posterity, and the latter have all sinned and become guilty in him. Not only he, therefore, but we all became worthy of eternal death. But what is the simple fact? This that we did not exist, except in the loins of Adam. Adam was the human race in principle, he was the root of the tree of the human organism. And, therefore, in the first place, it must be clear that even in the absence of all grace the human organism had to develop and the posterity of Adam had to be brought forth actually, before the punishment of eternal death could possibly be inflicted upon mankind in general. In the absence of the power of grace to save the organism, it would have been an act of grace to all the posterity of Adam if God had destroyed our first father and caused him to sink into eternal death before that posterity had received existence. Besides, sin itself would never have manifested itself in its real character and in all its consequences for human life and the world. True, in principle Adam's sin was no less sinful than all the crimes of his posterity taken together. Even as he himself was the root of the human organism, so his sin was the root-sin of all iniquity, even as he was the bearer of the entire human nature so his sin bore within itself all the sins of mankind. But even as the fullness of the human nature would never have displayed itself in Adam only but comes to complete manifestation in the full grown organism of the human race, so the real character and complete significance of sin doesn't reveal itself in the first sin of Adam but shows itself when it comes to development in the organism of the race.

And if sin and rebellion against the living God had been followed by eternal death immediately God would not have reached the justification of His Name and the glory of his righteousness, the theodicy would never have shone forth in all its significance.

From whatever point of view we may consider the question, the fact remains, that the human race was to have a history. Mark, we do not maintain that it is conceivable how without

God's grace the organism of the race could have existed. But on the other hand we are convinced that it is just as impossible to conceive how God would have destroyed the first man and woman immediately after they committed their sin against the living God. Creation was adapted to grace, called for grace, was such as to make the possibility that it would have no history whatever simply inconceivable.

—Holland, Mich.



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