



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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And God spake all these words, saying...

—Exodus 20:1

God Spake

God spake.

What was it like to hear God speak?

God's voice sounded like a trumpet (Ex. 19:16). It was exceeding loud and caused all the people of Israel in the camp to tremble. And no wonder! The voice of God is tremendous. When the risen Jesus Christ spoke to John, his trumpet voice crashed and resounded with the timbre and movement and fullness of many waters (Rev. 1:10, 15). Jehovah's mighty voice calleth those things which be not as though they were. For God said, "Let there be light," and there was light (Gen. 1:3). And Jehovah's mighty voice shall raise the dead at the last day. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16). Yes, Israel might tremble to hear the trump of God!

What else was it like to hear God speak?

God spoke to Israel face-to-face (Deut. 5:4). Of course he did! How perfectly like Jehovah to speak to his people face-to-face! Even though there is no equality whatsoever between Jehovah and his people. That much was obvious at Sinai. Above were clouds and darkness and thunders and lightnings and tempest. On the mountain below was the fire of Jehovah burning up to the heavens with searing heat and leaping flame. The children of Israel stood at the bottom of Mount Sinai on their side of the bounds that had been set, three million or so terrified faces all reflecting the fire and the lightning in the whites of their wide eyes. No equality whatsoever between Jehovah and Israel! Yet he spoke to them face-to-face. It was the covenant God who descended upon Sinai and who condescended unto his people.

What else was it like to hear God speak?

The Israelites heard the voice of the words (Deut. 4:12). With their human ears they heard the words spoken by the mouth of God. The words that they heard were not entirely new to them. Moses had trained them in the thou-shalts and thou-shalt-nots of manna gathering. Thou shalt gather double on the sixth day; thou shalt not gather on the sabbath (Ex. 16:23, 26, 29). But now they heard the voice of the words from God himself. Later God would write that law with his own finger on the tables of stone. But in this first glorious recitation of God's law, Israel heard the voice of the words.

What else was it like to hear God speak?

The Israelites heard the voice of the words, but they saw no manner of similitude (Deut. 4:12, 15). Jehovah was face-to-face with his people, but there was no image upon which their eyes could fasten. There was no similitude of a beast, no similitude of a man, no similitude of a fowl, no similitude of a creeping thing. The only thing they could see was consuming fire. It is a lesson to be learned well! The man who graves an image will be consumed by Jehovah's fire (Deut. 4:23–24). And another lesson: God's face is revealed not in a graven image but in his only begotten Son, who is the express image of his person (Heb. 1:3).

What was it like to hear God speak? Ah, but you can hear for yourself! In the house of God on the Lord's Day, listen: "And God spake all these words, saying..."

—AL

Reformed Pavilion is pleased to present to our readers the following article, “God Is God.” The article was written in Dutch by Rev. Henry Danhof and published in the *Standard Bearer* in October 1924.¹ Mr. Henry De Jong translated the article into English in time for it to be published in *Reformed Pavilion* in October 2024, exactly one hundred years after it first appeared.

The article is significant for several reasons. First and foremost, the article teaches the sound doctrine that God is God. The truth that God is God lies at the heart of the Reformed faith. Indeed, as Henry Danhof expounds, the truth that God is God must be the foundation and the kernel of all of the creature’s knowledge. Danhof makes the observation that a man’s concept of God will affect every other aspect of that man’s life. From the article:

For a man’s conception of God actually always underlies his whole worldview and interpretation of life. His conception of God controls his life. Our being conscious by faith of the fundamental relation in which we stand to God gives steering and direction, shape and color, content and quality to our knowing and willing in all the relationships of our lives.

One must have a right concept of God, but how is such a thing possible for mere creatures? After all, God is God, but man is only man. God is the infinite, but man is only finite. Danhof emphasized the fact of God’s exaltation as the creator and man’s abasement as the creature in order to emphasize the necessity of God’s revelation of himself to man. In light of the vast divide between God the infinite and man the finite, the only possibility of man’s knowing God is that God reveals himself to man. Only by this revelation does insignificant man know the living God.

The truth that God is God was a favorite topic of Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema, two of the fathers of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The truth that God is God was the ultimate bulwark against the doctrinal shenanigans in which their Christian Reformed Church (CRC) was involved in the early 1920s. The CRC had fallen in love with the theory of common grace. The theory of common grace offered the CRC all kinds of exciting connections to the world. Whether in Abraham Kuyper’s Netherlands or in Henry Beets’ America, the theory of common grace made cooperation with ungodly men possible. With their theory of common grace, Reformed churches would no longer be marginal or insignificant. With their theory of common grace, Reformed institutions could be on the forefront of society. For the theory of common grace made God love all men and bless all men. The theory of common grace repackaged the discoveries and advancements of ungodly men as the blessings of God to those ungodly men. And if those discoveries and advancements of the ungodly were God’s blessings, then the church could adopt the life of the world as her own. The theory of common grace came to the church in the midst of the world and offered her a bridge to that world. The CRC no longer sought to be characterized by the antithesis—the spiritual separation and enmity that God put between the church and the world. The CRC wanted to be characterized by cooperation and participation with the world and all the exciting happenings in the world. The theological justification for the church’s cooperation with the world was thought to be God’s common grace.

The CRC’s theory of common grace was shallow. It had to be shallow because the theory of common grace was man-centered. The theory arose as an excuse by which churchmen could cooperate with world-men in building the world-men’s earthly kingdom. The theory of common

¹ Henry Danhof, “God is God,” *Standard Bearer* 1, no. 1 (October 1924): 4–7.

grace aimed no higher than man. On the other hand, the truth that God is God is profound. The reader of Danhof's article will marvel at the infinite depths of the truth that God is God. And the truth that God is God sets everything else on a proper footing. For when God is God, the question is not what pleases man. When God is God, the question is what God hath said. Danhof and Hoeksema championed the truth that God is God as a defense against the man-centeredness of common grace. Danhof's article sets forth that glorious confession of all confessions: God is God.

The second reason that the following article is significant is that in it Danhof gives us a passing glimpse of the discussion that took place on the floor of the Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924. The Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo was a watershed synod. The synod adopted the three points of common grace as official church dogma. The aftermath of those decisions was the ungodly expulsion of Hoeksema, Danhof, and others from the denomination. Having turned God into a beggar by its doctrine, the CRC killed God's servants by its discipline. But God was in control even of this, for he reformed his church by establishing the Protestant Reformed Churches of those who were cast out of the CRC. Therefore, for the spiritual children of Danhof and Hoeksema today, it is interesting to catch a glimpse of what took place on the floor of synod in 1924.

Danhof, who was a delegate to synod, notes that synod had arrived at a critical juncture. Synod could not make any progress in stating the ground for common grace. The result of this impasse was that synod appeared to be leaning in the direction of exonerating Hoeksema and Danhof of the charges against them. At that moment—when the cause of common grace might go down to defeat and the cause of the gospel for which Hoeksema and Danhof stood might be vindicated—the acting chairman of synod made some remarks. Without relinquishing his chair so that he could speak to the issue, Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen said, “I cannot refute all heretics, not even my own brother, who is a

Baptist; but my Reformed antennae tell me ‘that Danhof and Hoeksema proceed from a wrong God-concept, and that therefore their doctrine is to be judged dangerous for our churches.’”

Suddenly the stalemate was broken. Men who had been willing to exonerate Hoeksema and Danhof were now galvanized against them. Van Dellen's “Reformed antennae” had twitched, and the delegates' Reformed antennae were suddenly twitching against the two brethren as well. Van Dellen's tactic was shrewd. No longer did synod need to prove the charges of false doctrine against Danhof and Hoeksema from scripture and the confessions. No longer did they need to rest their decision upon what was objective. Their antennae were twitching, and that was enough for them.

In the following article Danhof wonders at Van Dellen's antennae and how such flimsy things could become the ground upon which a whole synod could take its stand. Nevertheless, Danhof also takes hold of the doctrinal issue that Van Dellen raised: the God-concept. Yes, the God-concept! One's conception of God is all-important. And one's conception of God cannot come from oneself but must be given by God himself.

By relating the comments of Van Dellen as the background for his article, Danhof has provided us with a fascinating glance at the events on the floor of that unholy synod.

The third reason that the following article is significant is that this month marks exactly one hundred years since the *Standard Bearer* was born. Danhof, Hoeksema, and others started the *Standard Bearer* in order to sound forth a witness to the sovereign grace of God over against the common grace that their Christian Reformed denomination had adopted. The result of their witness for the truth—as it is always the result of witnessing for the truth—was that the false church cast the witnesses away, and the Protestant Reformed Churches were born. Danhof's article ran in the first issue of the *Standard Bearer*. In this historic month, then, *Reformed Pavilion* presents to you this historic

article so that a new generation can read it in this generation's own language.

Our thanks to Mr. Henry De Jong for his labor of love in translating the article. Many have noticed that Henry Danhof preached and wrote in what can be described as a “dense” style. Whereas Hoeksema's style was crystal clear, Danhof's style was thick. This is not a criticism of Danhof, for style is often a matter of preference and taste. But Danhof's dense style does mean that the translator's task is more arduous.

Our translator ably preserved Danhof's voice, so that the English rendering still sounds like Danhof. Danhof's dense style also means that the reader must work a bit harder and think a bit further to grasp Danhof's point. However, in matters of the truth, the labor to understand is pleasant.

Without further introduction, then, here is Henry Danhof's “God Is God.”

—AL

God is God

by Rev. H. Danhof in the *Standard Bearer*, October 1, 1924

Translated by Henry De Jong

When towards the evening of the third of last July synod had worked itself to the question of the ground for common grace, it could not proceed further; for quite some time the discussion was at an impasse, and the decision threatened to fall out in favor of the accused brethren; the president, then, Rev. I. Van Dellen—apparently with some slight hesitation—unburdened his mind matter-of-factly in the following way: “I cannot refute all heretics, not even my own brother, who is a Baptist; but my Reformed antennae tell me ‘that Danhof and Hoeksema proceed from a wrong God-concept, and that therefore their doctrine is to be judged dangerous for our churches.’”

Now the matter arose that there wasn't exactly a president when the president thus let himself speak, so that it could not be settled with an assayed vote whether the “Reformed antennae” of Reverend Van Dellen were justifiably present at the synod. And due to the absence of any responsible personality among these “Reformed antennae,” apparently it did not occur to either of them to administer a reprimand. Neither did these *antennae* let themselves be examined more closely concerning their own God-concept. For that reason, then, a comparative study of their God-concept and the representation of the “deviating brethren” also had to be dropped altogether. And, therefore,

with very little accuracy could men even ascertain knowledgeably the value of what these antennae had spoken by the mouth of Reverend Van Dellen.

But all this did not alter the fact that this outpouring of the president—perhaps also partly because he was president—very much found approval and imitation among the delegates. Men evidently saw an obvious way to get out of the difficulty. For, after all, men might permit themselves the supposition (only in reference to the “two deviating brethren”) that these did not stand purely in their view of God. Consequently, then, at the same time the conclusion really became obvious that they also erred in their conception of God's grace, as well as in other important points of doctrine. For a man's conception of God always underlies his whole worldview and interpretation of life. His conception of God controls his life. Our being conscious by faith of the fundamental relation in which we stand to God gives steering and direction, shape and color, content and quality to our knowing and willing in all the relationships of our lives.

At its root, then, all our knowledge is God-knowledge and faith-knowledge.

Therefore, in our handling of what God sets before us in the word of his revelation and of which we men have, or should have anyway, a

view and understanding—albeit in response to the above—we too then have thought that we had to say something about the God-idea or the God-concept first of all. For we are convinced that, just as it can only go well for man, who was created by God for God, when he focuses his life on God according to the revelation which God gave of himself, so we too shall only be able to succeed in our labor of study and illumination when in our view of God we stand purely and let ourselves be governed by God’s word entirely. We should not want to invent God or even conclude something in God from something in us or from something in the creature. The visible world around us does not present us a basis for a philosophical God-concept. Only when we incorporate the revelation that God has given of himself into our faith’s consciousness can we come to a pure confession of the NAME of the Lord.

According to this self-revelation of God, now, God is GOD. That is the kernel of the revelation that the triune God gave of himself. Yet very often it is presented differently. Sinful man, who believes himself to be autonomous, self-standing, and independent, often attempts to draw philosophical conclusions from the relatively known to the absolutely UNKNOWN; but the product of his idle fantasy is only an idol of his imagination and not the true God. The true God is not known as he is in himself. That is, not by the creature. God very much knows himself; he is completely conscious of himself; but he is not fully known by any creature. And this is so because the creature is creature and because God is God. The creation cannot comprehend its maker. A finite essence can never have a perfect comprehension of the infinite essence. No one, consequently, has a complete comprehension of God. Therefore, men should not assume, as is often done freely in religious circles, that mere words such as *love*, *light*, *spirit*, and the like could name God’s essence. That they do not do. And that applies also to the word *BEING*. It is true, sometimes God says that he is; and he means undoubtedly too, then, by that expression, to point out the distinction between the existence

of the creature and the BEING of God. Admittedly, it would be difficult to maintain that God uses that name throughout the holy scriptures merely to distinguish himself in his own divine separateness from every creature. In any case, the word *BEING*, or the expression *the BEING*, does not especially emphasize the positive content of the peculiarly divine in God, whereby he is what he is, whereby he is God, and whereby he is essentially different than any other essence. But that, in our judgment, is precisely what happens in the word *GOD*. As God reveals himself to his creature as God, he gives therewith not only the knowledge that, as God, he is, but also very particularly therewith gives the creature to know what he is, specifically and in relation to the creature and in distinction from any other essence.

God is God. What that God-being of God is, we shall never be able to understand completely; but we very much know that God is God, for he himself has revealed it to us. In himself the triune God is something—something that a created essence is not. He possesses something divinely particular that, in the sense and manner in which he possesses it, is never possessed by any other essence. Also not by another god. For he alone is God. Other gods there are not. Beside God there is none. Therefore, God is to be compared with no one, and no likeness is applicable to him. God cannot be classified with any sort of essences from whom he might differ in particulars but who would then nevertheless essentially be still like him; therefore, human reason cannot distinguish, compare, and formulate conclusions regarding God, in order by so doing to come to an abstract God-concept.

For every creature God is INCOMPREHENSIBLE. He is so not only in the unfathomableness of his ESSENCE but also in all his perfections and in “all his way and work.” “There is no searching of his understanding.” As also Elihu testifies, “Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.” The word of the poet² applies to everything that concerns God.

² Nicholas Beets (1814–1903).

When the comprehensible has been clasped,
The incomprehensible remains ungrasped.

No one names God's name to us. No one describes him to us. No imagination, tongue, or signs inform us concerning him. God is the INEXPRESSIBLE. For the creature God is the unfathomable, unspeakable, but nevertheless—yes, also because of this—the adorable MYSTERY of all mysteries: the great FAITH-SECRET. No, the creature names not God. For it even angel and man lack “comprehension and voice.” Nonetheless, there exists rapport between the creator and the creation. The creature knows God, enjoys him, worships him, and praises him. Indeed, man does not even possess a proper God-concept because he is too finite and limited; and he is unable to give a proper definition of God because in God everything divine is unique, essential, absolute, and perfect, so that no resemblance derived from any creature applies to him; but that does not make God into an abstraction for man. Being converted, by the communion of life, by the bond of the covenant, man knows his God—albeit according to man's own measure—in God's fullness of eternal reality.

In God we have the incomprehensible fullness of essence and life, understanding and will, blessedness and all-sufficiency. God is the completely independent, the absolutely unique, the eternally living, the fully self-conscious, the perfectly all-sufficient and blessed. Now, man cannot reach thereunto with his understanding. For man himself is not that. Therefore also he does not comprehend such. For him that positively divine is unspeakably unfathomable. He is unable to penetrate to the hidden basis of things, to the depths of God's understanding, to the limit, the utmost of God's ways, to the very essence of the Almighty. God always remains for him the High and the Exalted, who liveth in eternity. But that does not take away that for man there very really is a God who lives and with whom we, men, stand in rapport.

Man knows his God. He does not know him as God is in himself, nor as God is fully conscious in himself, nor with the knowledge

wherewith God knows himself. In his knowledge of God, man is completely, wholly bound to the revelation that God has given of himself to man. What may lie behind that self-revelation is completely unknown to him, and he is unable to approach either with his thought or imagination or with his language. But the knowledge of God that man possesses is for him suitable, true, reliable, sufficient, and saving. For with it he knows God as God and as his God. And to know the truth is life eternal. Man knows the God of his life according to his own measure. That is for him blessedness. That knowledge, after all, is given with and rooted in the fellowship of life with the Eternal. It is a fruit of that fellowship. Therefore it is, strictly speaking, never in its nature philosophic-knowledge. It is faith-experience. Our God-knowledge is faith-knowledge. Precisely, therefore, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The believer finds in the mysteries of his God his life's element, comes through contemplation of them to adoration, and calls out in holy delight, “His name is WONDERFUL!”

In receiving such conscious, blessed worshipping and thankful glorifying of the Lord's name by man, revelation (whereby to his creature God as God made himself known) reaches its perfection and purpose. The triune God has, as God, revealed himself with a goal. The triune God seeks himself in everything and by everything. All creation must be regarded as the fruit of God's will. Every thought of necessity, need, or coincidence lacks a right to exist. It is not accidental that

The heav'ns God's glory do declare,
The skies his hand-works preach;
Day utters speech to day, and night
To night doth knowledge teach.

No, the name of the Lord is glorious in all the earth, and God's majesty has been set above the heavens; and all things show forth the work of the creator because God has wrought everything for his own sake. Whoever now wants to enjoy and admire that nature but does not ascend up into worshipful and thankful admiration of the

name of the Lord, which has been revealed for that very purpose, acts irreligiously and godlessly at the root.

For God has made the earth, and he has created man in it; and his hands have stretched out the heavens, and he has commanded all their hosts. And he has willed that the people whom he has formed for himself shall tell his praise. In the realm of creation also, all things are out of him and through him and to him. God as God has revealed himself in and through and to his creatures and out of the creatures. By the creatures he wills to be known as God and thanked. God has also made that will known. That makes the God-knowledge out of nature bear a moral character. Mere intellectual knowledge of God from the works of his hands is an impossibility. He becomes known from it as God, and it is his will to be recognized as God by the creatures and thanked by the creatures. All God-knowledge that does not lead thereto deprives man of every excuse before God and makes him punishable. For thereunto that revelation of God extends. It contains the revelation of God's will to man that, from the creatures, he must know God as God, his God, and that he must acknowledge and thank him as such.

After all, from the creation of the world on, his invisible things, both his eternal power and Godhead, are understood and seen by the creatures. Not wanting to notice that is sin and punishable. In that sin the heathen made themselves guilty. Knowing God, they have not glorified and thanked him as God. They had other intentions, vain considerations. As a result their God-knowledge diminished. Their foolish hearts became darkened. They became foolish and went wrong in their religious practices. They changed the glory of God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man and of an animal. Against that the Lord's wrath ignited. For that was ungodly and a work of unrighteousness. Therefore, God gave them over to an evil mind, to do things that do not behoove them.

In that sin the modern heathen are guilty too. Just like the worldly-wise sages of olden times,

today too men of science and philosophy speak—though they measure the starry heavens, move swiftly through the air, walk on the bottom of the sea, burrow into the bowels of the earth, analyze light, join sounds together, variegate and merge colors, and place themselves at the service of the powers of creation—of eternal matter, evolution, natural law, mysterious power, a becoming of God in man, chance, fortune, accident, arbitrariness, fate, and so forth; yet all their thoughts are that there is no God. They do not thank the God who has made himself known to them in his will, that they should glorify him. They do violence to their soul and have loved death.

The sinner suppresses the truth—the pure presentation of God, God-knowledge in its spiritual-ethical purpose—in unrighteousness. Under the spell of the devil's seduction, he has judged that God's revealed will for his life, the moral law, is to be judged not good. He holds Satan's representation for truth. And according to that representation, God is accused. In the revelation of his will for men's lives, God should be judged not good; in his intention with man, he is wrong. The Lord's command should not be judged holy and righteous and good. That was Satan's representation of God. And that is, through faith in the word of the devil, the God-view of the sinner. As Israel he says, "The way of the Lord is not right!"

And now, over against it, God maintains that in all his way and work he is right, but the ways of sinners are unrighteous. The sinner's view of God, inspired by Satan, thus runs counter to the representation that God gave of himself in the revelation of his will for the lives of men, the law that demands perfect love. An issue of a God-view, a struggle of two wills!

In that struggle now God's counsel shall stand. He will accomplish all his good pleasure. The ends of the ages will justify him. Eternity will reveal that Satan and the sinner are lying in their view of God but that God is true. It will be obvious that God alone is good; and in his will for man, in his law, he is holy. In the historical

realization of his eternal purpose, God will assert himself as almighty God. He shall do with the host of the heavens and with the inhabitants of the earth according to his will, so that no one stays his hand or can say to him, “What doest thou?” He will make all things subservient to his will. Therein it shall be revealed that God has wrought all things for his name’s sake and that almighty God, according to the immutability of his will, knows how to fulfill his counsel. But the realization of God’s eternal good pleasure will also make us know God in the riches of his perfections of glory and holiness. They will reveal him, in relation to the creature, as he truly is. And when, in Christ by the Holy Spirit, that self-revelation of God—in opposition to the representation that Satan gave of God and that the sinner had made his own—shall be fully accomplished in man’s consciousness, then the creature’s view of God will correspond with the presentation that God gave of himself.

And then the child of God will say that God is good. That then is his view of God, which he maintains over against Satan’s representation and over against what as a sinner he had previously thought of God. He retracts his former view of God. He is converted. Now he says, “God is good.” He alone is good. He is unspeakably, fully, divinely good. He is good in relation to the creature and holy in his will. He is worthy of love, worthy to serve, worthy of praise. Therefore, because in himself God is holy and good in his will for the creature, and out of free grace in Christ is good to him, therefore the redeemed says, “Lord, I shall love thee heartily and glorify thee in the highest, eternally and always!”

O taste and see that the Lord is good!

To know Him is life eternal.

—HD



REFORMED
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REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

THE ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

OCTOBER 31, 2024 | 7:30PM

Jesus is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:6).

Jesus is “made unto us...righteousness” (I Cor. 1:30).

Jesus is “Christ our righteousness” (Belgic Confession 22).

But what can it mean that Jesus is our righteousness? Certainly it means that Jesus himself is righteous, and how glorious is his righteousness! When the law said, “Do,” Jesus did. When the law said, “Don’t,” Jesus didn’t. Jesus stood under all the strict commandments of the righteous God’s holy law, and Jesus perfectly obeyed. Oh, yes, Jesus is righteous!

But Jesus is *our* righteousness? What can it mean? Listen to this lovely explanation: “Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits and so many holy works which he has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness” (Belgic Confession 22).

How wonderful! How unexpected! It is the language of substitution. It is the language of one’s doing something instead of another and for another. Jesus stood in the place of us ungodly sinners and obeyed God’s law “for us and in our stead”!

And the result of Jesus’ substitutionary obedience? We are righteous before God! Not because we obeyed a single commandment but because Jesus obeyed every single commandment for us. Yes, we are righteous before God! Because Jesus is our righteousness.

We call Jesus’ substitutionary obedience for us his *active obedience*. This Reformation Day, come hear the glorious gospel and blessed comfort of Jesus’ active obedience. Come rejoice in the wonderful news that Jesus is our righteousness!

HOST

Remnant Reformed
Church

SPEAKER

Rev. Andrew Lanning

FORMAT

Lecture followed by
Q&A and Refreshments

VENUE

Pavilion Christian School, 9181 Kenowa Avenue Southwest, Grand Rapids, MI 49534

lawgospel.com

Article LXXVIII. The New King and His Kingdom (continued)

Thus far we maintained strictly the all-comprehensive nature of the counsel of God on the one hand, and the moral freedom and accountability of man on the other.

We absolutely refused to minimize the power and the sovereignty of God, or to admit that even man in any way is able to frustrate the counsel of God. To do this would mean the death-blow to our Reformed faith. God is and remains the absolute Sovereign. His counsel was never frustrated, was never changed, was never side-tracked because of any action of man or the devil. All history, evil included, is an unfolding of the counsel of the Almighty.

On the other hand we just as absolutely maintained the accountability of man. We strongly repudiated the charge of determinism, sometimes brought against our Reformed confession. Man is a freely acting agent. What he does he performs consciously and voluntarily. He is and remains free in a formal sense.

And though these two lines of God's absolutely all-comprehensive counsel on the one hand, and of man's moral freedom and responsibility should run parallel as far as eye could see, as McCosh expresses it in his work "The Divine Government," nevertheless we will cling on the basis of Scripture to both these truths without surrender or compromise. It may be frankly admitted that there is a mystery here. The question how God after all maintains His irresistible counsel in case of free moral agents, how it is possible for God to cooperate with these free moral agents so as to realize His own counsel and yet maintain the responsibility of the free agents, may ultimately place us before a

dilemma. But this does not mean that we must simply discard one of the horns of the dilemma and be satisfied that in the one we possess all the truth. We must maintain both, and that very emphatically. And, according to the needs and dangers of the times, we must emphasize either of these more strongly than the other. And since in our time and in our surroundings there is but little danger of losing sight of the accountability of man, and grave danger to lose the truth of God's all-comprehensive counsel (the air we breathe is Pelagian) we cannot soon lay too much stress on the sovereign counsel of our God.

Yet, though we cannot always solve the problems that arise in this connection; though we cannot trace the operation of the Almighty upon the free moral agents, we surely may do two things. In the first place, we may elucidate our view as much as possible; and in the second place we may guard and defend ourselves against various accusations and false indictments. Thus we came to touch the subject of determinism. And thus we are also obliged to investigate a little more deeply into the nature of moral freedom.

And then I would like to make a distinction which is generally overlooked. It is the distinction between the freedom of the will and the moral freedom of the person. Generally, when the subject of man's responsibility and moral freedom is discussed we speak of the freedom of the will only. Freedom concerns the person, and so does accountability. A nature is not responsible. An intellect is not responsible. A will is not responsible. A nature is not the subject of action. My intellect does not think. My will does not will. But it is the person that acts through that

nature, to which both intellect and will belong, that does both the thinking and the willing. This is so plain that it would hardly seem necessary to lay special stress on it. And yet, this is generally forgotten. I am the subject of all my actions. I do, my “ego,” my person does the thinking, my person does the willing. I am responsible. Guilt is imputed to the person, not to the nature. And, therefore, the question as to moral responsibility and freedom concerns in the last instance, not the will, not the intellect, neither both, but the person that acts through them.

If this is borne in mind it will be easy to see that man can never lose his moral freedom in the formal sense, that he always remains responsible for all his actions.

In the formal sense, moral freedom is nothing else than the state in which the person can act without being determined by anything foreign to his own nature. It simply means that the person acts deliberately and voluntarily.

Let us investigate a little more deeply.

As has been stated, in the minds of many, freedom of the will and moral freedom are absolutely identical. And, again, to many freedom of the will implies that the will is absolutely undetermined. It is really identical with caprice and lawlessness. There are no limits, no laws, no boundaries for the will. It is free to will anything. It is uncaused and undetermined. In any given case the will can do anything it pleases. In its choice it is not determined by anything whatever. If this is true, it is plain that even the counsel of God or the Providence of God does not in any way control and determine that capricious, lawless, uncaused will of man. The illustration that is frequently used to elucidate and prove this view is that of suicide. It is said that God can never have determined the hour of my death, for the simple reason that I can at any moment will to pick out that hour for myself and make an end to my own life. I am free to will to commit suicide at any moment. In that absolute sense, so the claim is, the will is free. Never you know what the will is going to decide upon next, for its choice is free and absolutely undetermined. According to this

same conception responsibility can exist only when in that absolute sense the will of man is free and undetermined. Only when man’s will remains uncaused is man answerable for his actions. Now, on the very face of it is it plain that this view is sadly erroneous and superficial. In that sense there is no freedom, there never was any freedom, and in all eternity there will be no freedom of will. That Scripture testifies against such a view need hardly be mentioned. But it is also radically opposed by facts. There is in history a certain definite course of development, a certain causality noticeable that is inexplicable if the will of man is so capricious, so absolutely undetermined. Under given circumstances men generally act in a given way. Besides, the freedom of the will as illustrated by the case of suicide above mentioned is merely imaginary. It is easy for a man to make the statement that he feels perfectly free to commit suicide, and that his will is free to will it. The fact is, however, that this is not true. I would frankly advise such a person to try it out. Let him put that freedom to the test, and he will find that his will is not as free as he imagined. Neither is that view in harmony with our consciousness. Any man that will take but little pains to investigate will come to the conclusion that his will is subject to laws and conditions, and by no means absolutely undetermined. And again, in spite of this fact, any person will find in his own consciousness the testimony that, nevertheless, he is responsible for all he does. In that sense of the word, then, freedom of the will is inconceivable.

But there is more.

Fact is, that the will never acts independently and separately from the intellect. It is not necessary for us to enter into the long controversy that has been carried on about the question as to the relation of intellect and will. It is sufficient here to mention the fact which is very evident, that the will never acts apart from the intellect. The will, it was rightly said, without the intellect, is blind. There is a reciprocal action of intellect and will. When we speak of them as two faculties we should never forget that they

are most intimately related, and often it is difficult to determine exactly what must be ascribed to the intellect proper and what to the will. However we may picture this relation, the fact is clear that even in this sense the will is not free and entirely independent. The intellect judges what is good and desirable, and the will chooses accordingly. In the abstract it may be reasoned that the will is absolutely free to choose in direct conflict with the judgment of the intellect; in actual fact this never takes place. In the abstract I can conceive of it that the intellect judges it absolutely wrong and undesirable to commit suicide and that the will nevertheless chooses to do so; the moment such reasoning is put to the test its fallacy is felt. And, therefore, the will is rational. But if this is so, it is also plain that you cannot speak of freedom of the will apart from the freedom of the intellect. To speak of freedom of the will all by itself is impossible.

But even thus I do not touch the point in question. The question of moral freedom, the question of responsibility, does not concern intellect and will as such, but concerns the person. Surely, in the material sense, in the highest, spiritual sense of the word, freedom concerns the liberation of intellect and will, of our whole nature from the slavery of sin. When with our whole nature we shall again stand in the true covenant relation to God, we shall be truly free. To know as we are known and to love without fear, — that is perfect freedom materially. But this is not the question that concerns us now. We are now discussing the question of freedom from a formal aspect, the freedom that constitutes the necessary basis for responsibility. And then, we must go back of intellect and will, back of the nature, to the person that is the subject of all action. After all, the intellect and will do not act. It is not so that I can watch my own intellect and will as something apart from my ego, to see what they will do. On the contrary, it is I, ego, who do the thinking and the willing. It is my person that acts

through the nature, through intellect and will, it is my person that is accountable. And freedom in this formal sense is nothing else than the state of any person in which he is able to act in conformity with his own moral nature, i.e. rationally and voluntarily. All man's actions are in harmony with his own judgment and his own free choice. And in that sense man is free. In that sense Adam was free before he fell. In that sense the sinner, dead in sin and misery, is free even though he can will nothing but sin. In that sense the Christian is free, though he confesses that all his good works are prepared from before the foundation of the world. In that sense the devil is free, though he hates God with all his being. The sinner sins because he chooses to sin. The devil hates because he wills to hate God. There is no conflict, no lack of freedom in that sense of the word. And it is this freedom, according to which the moral agent acts in accord with his own nature, that fixes responsibility.

Now, God from eternity has His all-comprehensive counsel according to which He works all things in time, according to which He also controls the acts of man, good and evil, so as to realize that counsel. In a mysterious way, too deep for us to fathom, through His Spirit He so cooperates with this moral agent that he can never act against that eternal counsel of the Almighty.

He does this in such a way that Himself never becomes the subject of man's actions. Neither is He in any way guilty of man's sin. All His works are righteousness and truth.

He does this in such a way that man never loses for a moment the feeling of responsibility. He convinces also the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. Man assumes inevitably the responsibility of his own acts, good and evil.

But the manner of this divine operation is an inscrutable mystery not to be penetrated by human reason. It remains an object of faith.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.