

**The Theology of Grace in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius
and Philip van Limborch: A Study in the Development of
Seventeenth Century Dutch Arminianism**

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Westminster Theological Seminary

**In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree**

Doctor of Philosophy

1985

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Dissertation Abstract

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The dissertation addresses the problem of the theological relationship between the theology of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and the theology of Philip van Limborch (1633-1712). Arminius is taken as a representative of original Arminianism and Limborch is viewed as a representative of developed Remonstrantism. The problem of the dissertation is the nature of the relationship between Arminianism and Remonstrantism. Some argue that the two systems are fundamentally the same, others argue that Arminianism logically entails Remonstrantism and others argue that they ought to be radically distinguished. The thesis of the dissertation is that the presuppositions of Arminianism and Remonstrantism are radically different.

The thesis is limited to the doctrine of grace. There is no discussion of predestination. Rather, the thesis is based upon four categories of grace: (1) its need; (2) its nature; (3) its ground; and (4) its appropriation.

The method of the dissertation is a careful, separate analysis of the two theologians. Chapters two and three set forth Arminius' understanding of grace. There is considerable interaction with secondary literature in an attempt to come to an informed understanding of Arminius' theology of grace. Chapters four, five and six attempt to understand Limborch's theology of grace. Since secondary literature on Limborch is scarce, this is the most original work of the dissertation where the original Latin sources are brought to bear on the thesis of the dissertation.

After careful analysis of the respective theologians in the previous chapters, chapter seven compares the two according to their differences and similarities. They differ on the original state of man, the nature of the fall's effects, the natural ability of fallen man, the nature of the Spirit's work, the meaning of the death of Christ, the nature of saving righteousness, and the condition of applied righteousness. Arminius stands with the theology of the Reformation while Limborch's theology shows the influence of the Enlightenment. While they have some similarities, including conditionality, synergism, and universalism, these similarities are governed by radically different presuppositions as the differences demonstrate. Consequently, it is not the case that Arminianism logically entails Remonstrantism.

The dissertation advocates a recognition of the fundamental distinction between Arminianism and Remonstrantism. It argues that the categories of historical theology ought to recognize this distinction. As a result, Arminius ought to be regarded as a theologian of the Reformation, but Limborch, and his Remonstrant brethren, ought to be seen as the advocates of a theology which undermines the distinctives of the Reformation.

Dedication

Within his loving providence and tender care, God has restored to me the joy of companionship and given me the incomparable love of two children.

By the grace of God, I dedicate this work to my caring wife, Barbara Elaine, and my precious children, Ashley Dawn and Joshua Mark. They have given me the strength, will and joy of heart to complete this task.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: Problem, Thesis and Method

Arminianism, as a theological system, derives its name from Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).¹ Born in Oudewater in South Holland, he was educated as a youth in the schools of Utrecht and Marburg. When Leiden University opened in 1575, he enrolled under the patronship of Peter Bertius. In 1581 the Merchant Guild of Amsterdam undertook Arminius' support and sent him to study at the Academy in Geneva. Though at first unable to fit into the Aristotelian setting of Geneva due to his Ramist tendencies, he eventually completed his studies there though he spent some time at Basel. He studied under both Calvin's successor Theodore Beza (1519-1605) at Geneva and the renowned Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1540-1607) at Basel.² During this period, Arminius sojourned in Italy for seven months in order to hear the philosophical lectures of James Zabarella at Padua and to visit Rome (1586-1587).³ There is uncertainty as to the nature of Arminius' views during his student period. Bangs argues that when Arminius returned from Geneva in 1587 that he had already rejected the predestinarian views of Beza and "probably never had agreed" with them.⁴ The traditional position, however, is that Arminius changed his position after he had become a pastor in Amsterdam and read the views of Dirck Coornheert (1522-1590).⁵ Whether or not Arminius changed his views, he soon found himself the center of controversy in Amsterdam.

Though Arminius began preaching on Romans in November, 1588 (concluding in September, 1601), it was not until he reached Romans 7 in 1591 that any controversy broke out.⁶ Discussion continued about his positions until 1593 after he had concluded his sermons on Romans 9. During this period "most of his ministerial brethren inveighed against him" not only because of his views, but because of his rising popularity among Lutherans and Mennonites.⁷ However, from 1593-1603, the waters of controversy were calm as the attention of the Dutch Church had turned to the Brownists, Anabaptists, political problems and a devastating plague in 1602. During this period, Arminius' views

¹ The definitive biography is Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971). Other major biographies are Nathan Bangs, *The Life of James Arminius, D.D.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843); Caspar Brandt, *The Life of James Arminius, D.D.*, trans. John Guthrie (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1903); J. H. Maronier, *Jacobus Arminius. Een biografie.* (Amsterdam: Y. Rogge, 1905) and A. W. Harrison, *The Beginnings of Arminianism to the Synod of Dort* (London: University of London Press, LTD, 1926).

² At Basel, Arminius lectured on Romans 7 in Grynaeus' presence and found his approval. Cf. Maronier, *Arminius*, pp. 60, 61. In fact, Grynaeus was known to have often said: "Let my Hollander answer for me" (Brandt, *Arminius*, p. 47). Arminius was invited to join the faculty at Basel but declined due to his youth.

³ Brandt, *Arminius*, pp. 51, 52.

⁴ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 141.

⁵ Brandt, *Arminius*, pp. 44ff. Arminius was asked to answer a booklet authored by some Delft ministers in 1589 which advocated an infralapsarianism instead of Beza's supralapsarian. Arminius, of course, eventually rejected both if he had not already. Cf. Bangs, *Arminius*, pp. 138ff.

⁶ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 128.

⁷ Brandt, *Arminius*, p. 88.

were solidified and forty-five percent of his writing was completed. Though they all remained unpublished till after this death, he penned his lectures on Romans 7 and 9, conducted a correspondence with Francis Junius and wrote his response to the predestinarian views of William Perkins. Bangs has called his tract against Perkins the "basic document of Arminianism."⁸ Even though Arminius did not publish any material while he lived in Amsterdam, his theological views had been formed and they would not undergo any substantial change throughout the rest of his life.⁹

On May 8, 1603 he was appointed Professor of Theology at Leiden University, and received the Doctor of Theology on July 11, 1603. As a Professor, his teaching became well-known and his string of publications began. From this point on controversy was a way of life for Arminius and it took its toll on his health. He suffered an early death in 1609. The major issue of his career was the doctrine of predestination. He argued that God elected believers in Christ and reprobated unbelievers. God did not elect without any foreknowledge of faith or lack of it. Faith is the condition, not the effect, of election. This embroiled Arminius into other controversies such as the operational mode of grace (whether it is resistible or irresistible), the nature of free will and other related issues. On October 30, 1608, Arminius defended his controversial positions before the States of Holland at The Hague where he presented his *Declaration of Sentiments*.¹⁰ This is the most succinct and forthright statement of his views ever published during his lifetime. Bangs offers this appraisal of its importance:¹¹

The *Declaration* represents the mature views of Arminius. He spoke firmly and openly, attacking what he found in the church that he felt was wrong, and offering a clear exposition of his own views at those points which were controverted. The diffidence is gone; he knows that the time to speak has come.

The *Declaration* would, in fact, be one of the last published statements that Arminius would make. He died the next year.

The distinctive points of Arminius' theology were developed and adopted by some within the Dutch Reformed Church of the Netherlands. In 1610 this party presented a "Remonstrance" in which they summarized their theological thinking in five points. As a result, the party received the name "Remonstrant." Those five points, often considered a summary of Arminianism, affirmed the predestination of believers, the freedom of the will to resist grace, the possibility of apostasy, the universal potential of grace, and necessity of grace for any saving good. After their exclusion from the state-controlled church at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), they organized themselves into the Remonstrant Brotherhood (1619).¹² The primary leaders of the initial movement were

⁸ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 209.

⁹ One of the major theses of Bang's dissertation was that Arminius' early theology in Amsterdam was not fundamentally different from his later theology in Leiden, cf. "Arminius and Reformed Theology" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Chicago, 1957).

¹⁰ The original Dutch version has been edited and published by G.J. Hoenderdaal, *Verklaring van Jacobus Arminius afgelegd in de vergadering van de Staten van Holland op 30 Ocktober 1608* (Lochem: De Tijdstroom, 1960)..

¹¹ Bangs, *Arminius*, pp. 307, 308.

¹² For history, biographies and bibliographies of the Remonstrantsche Broederschap, see Lucie J. N. K. van Aken, *De Remonstrantsch Broederschap in verleden en heden, historische schets* (Arnhem:

Johan Uitenbogaert (1557-1644) whom Arminius had met at Geneva and Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) who was a student of Arminius' at Leiden and later succeeded him as Professor of Theology at Leiden.¹³ Though banned from the Netherlands in 1619, State persecution, for all practical purposes, ceased upon the death of Stadholder Maurice in 1625. They gained enough influence in the Netherlands to establish a theological school at Amsterdam in 1634 which was attached to the new college founded in 1632. Simon Episcopius headed the new theological school which opened with seven students in October of 1634.¹⁴ In the intervening year, 1633, Philip van Limborch was born.

The leading thinker among the Remonstrants in the late seventeenth century was Philip van Limborch (1633-1712).¹⁵ He was the great-nephew of Simon Episcopius. His mother, Geertruid, was the daughter of Simon's brother, Rembert (Rem Egbertsz Bisschop). Consequently, he was a second generation Remonstrant. He grew up in a Remonstrant family and was trained at a Remonstrant institution. In 1647 he entered the Remonstrant school at Amsterdam where he studied ethics under Caspar Barlaeus, and history under Gerard Vossius (1577-1649). They had both been removed from the University of Leiden for their Remonstrant positions. He studied theology under Stephanus Curcellaeus (Etienne de Courcelles) who succeeded Episcopius at Amsterdam in 1644 and philosophy under Arnold Senguerd (1610-1668). He gained his knowledge

Van Loghum Slaterus, 1947); Adrian van Cattenburgh, *Bibliotheca scriptorum remonstrantium, cui subjunctum est Specimen controversiarum inter remonstrantes et Socinum eiusque asseclas, exhibitum ipsissimis scriptorum verbis* (Amsterdam, 1728); A. M. Cerisier, *Geschichte der Entstehung der Remonstranten der damit verbundenen Unruhen & der dadurch veranlassten Dordrechtischen Synode* (Osnabruck: Carl, 1799); H. C. Rogge, *Beschrijvende catalogus der pamflettenverzameling van de boekerij der Remonstrantsche kerk te Amsterdam*, 5 vols (Amsterdam: J. H. Scheltema, 1862-1865); J. A. Beyerman, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap*, 2nd ed. (Baarn: Hollandia Drukkerij, 1930); and J. Tideman, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap. Biografische naamlijst van hun professoren, predikanten en proponenten* (Amsterdam: Y. Rogge, 1905). A brief survey is given by G. J. Hoenderdaal, "Remonstrantie en Contraremonstrantie," *Nederlands Archief Kerkgeschiedenis* 51.1 (1970): 49-92.

¹³ The best English biography of Episcopius is by Frederick Calder, *Memoirs of Simon Episcopius* (London: Hayward and Moore, 1838). On both figures, see also A. W. Harrison, *Beginnings, and Arminianism* (London: Duckworth, 1937).

¹⁴ Cf. Harrison, *Arminianism*, p. 108.

¹⁵ The definitive biography of Limborch is P. J. Barnouw, *Philippus van Limborch* (Leiden, 1963). Other major biographical discussions are T. J. de Boer, in *Lettres Inedites de John Locke a ses amis Nicolas Thoynard, Philippe van Limborch et Edward Clarke*, ed. M. Henry Ollion (Le Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912), pp. 149-61; Pierre Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, trans. John P. Bernard, Thomas Birch and John Lockman (London, 1735), 7:85-90 and Jean Le Clerc, "A Funeral Oration upon the Death of Mr. Philip Limborch," in *A Complete System, or Body of Divinity, trans. and abridgment of Limborch's Theologia Christiana* by William Jones (London: John Darby, 1713). The Latin version of Le Clerc's oration appeared in the 1730 edition of *Theologia Christiana*. For major encyclopedic biographies, see B. Glasius, ed., *Godgeleerd Nederland: Biographisch Woordenboek van Nederlandsche Godgeleerden* (Hertogenbosch: Gebr. Muller, 1851-1856); M. Haefler, ed., *Nouvelle Biographie Generale* (Paris, 1862) and J. P. de Bie and J. Loosjes, ed., *Biographisch Woordenboek van Protestantsche Godgeleerden in Nederland* (The Hague: Martins Nijhoff, 1919).

of ecclesiastical history under the tutorship of David Blondellus (1590-1655) who succeeded Vossius in 1649.

On June 9, 1651 Limborch was baptized into the Remonstrant Church as a believing adult.¹⁶ He spent one year (1653-1654) at the Reformed theological school in Utrecht where he studied under the eminent Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676).¹⁷ Le Clerc observes that he went there to understand Voetius' method of theology and how he "defended [his] Doctrines."¹⁸ After he passed his theological exams in 1655, he was ordained a minister in the Remonstrant Brotherhood. In 1657 he became the minister of the Remonstrant congregation in Gouda. Bayle reports that his ministry there was a "great success."¹⁹

While at Gouda he continued his theological studies. De Boer mentions that he read avidly and his favorite authors were Erasmus, Hugo Grotius and Episcopius.²⁰ He also began his tremendous literary activity at Gouda. In 1657, he published thirty-five Dutch sermons by Simon Episcopius on Matthew 5, and in 1669 would publish another thirty-two sermons by Episcopius on different texts.²¹ In 1660, he published the first edition of the collected letters of early Remonstrant leaders, including Arminius, Vossius, Episcopius, et al.²² In 1661, he completed the publication of Episcopius' collected works begun by Curcellaeus in 1650.²³ Later, while in Amsterdam, Limborch would edit and publish the works of Curcellaeus himself.²⁴ In addition to these major works, Limborch authored many pamphlets in Dutch on specific issues while at Gouda.

In 1667 he was called to be the minister of the Remonstrant Church in Amsterdam. In the same year he succeeded Arnold Poelenburg (d. 1667) as Professor of Theology in the Remonstrant theological school. On April 19, 1668 the position was given to him permanently. The conditions that the one appointed to the chair had to fulfill indicate the character and intellect which Limborch possessed.²⁵ He remained the leading professor in the school until his death on April 30, 1712 at the age of 79. During these

¹⁶ de Boer, "Limborch," p. 152.

¹⁷ For his biography and influence, see A. C. Dunker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1897); C. Steenblok, *Gisbertus Voetius zijn leven en werken* (Gouda: Gereformeerde Pers, 1976); and J. A. Cramer, *De Theologische Faculteit te Utrecht ten tijde van Voetius* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon N.V., 1932).

¹⁸ Le Clerc, "Oration," p. 9.

¹⁹ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 7:88.

²⁰ de Boer, "Limborch," p. 153.

²¹ See Rogge for a complete list of Limborch's Dutch and Latin publications.

²² Limborch and Christian Hartsoecher, *Praestantium ac eruditorum vivorum epistolae ecclesiasticus et theologicae varii argumenti* (Amsterdam: H. Dendrinum, 1660, 1684, 1704).

²³ Limborch, *Simonis Episcopii operum Theologicorum tomus Secundus* (Gouda, 1661). Both volumes were published together in 1665 at Amsterdam.

²⁴ Limborch, *Stephani Curcellaei Opera Theologica omnia* (Amsterdam, 1675).

²⁵ de Boer, p. 155: "En 1666 l'assemblee de la confrerie avait juge que son Professeur devait reunir less conditons suivantes, (1) un vie irreprochable; (2) erudition theologique; (3) un bon caractere; (4) amour de la tolerance; (5) aptitude a l'enseignement; (6) jouir d'un bon renom et de la consideration generale meme en dhors de la confrerie; (7) connaissance de l'histoire et de la philosophie, principalement de la philosophie de Rene Descarte. Limborch repondait sans aucun doute a toutes ces exigences, y compris celle d'un heureux caractere."

years as an instructor in the school, Limborch's influence spread. He was in constant correspondence with English philosophers and theologians, and in dialogue with English dissenters and Anabaptists in Holland.²⁶ In addition, his teaching and writing drew attacks from both the Contra-Remonstrants and Lutherans. His influence gave Arminianism a certain rational acceptability. Colie remarks that "much of the respect given Arminianism late in the seventeenth century was the result of Limborch's work."²⁷

The major work of Limborch's life was his *Theologia Christiana*. Since Episcopius and Curcellaeus could not finish their systematic theologies, the Brotherhood requested Limborch to write a definitive systematic theology for Remonstrantism. Limborch completed his *magnum opus* in 1686 which went through five editions.²⁸ Since its publication it has been known as the "most complete and best known exposition of [early] Arminianism."²⁹ Certainly, Limborch's other works are important, but the key to his theology is his *Theologia Christiana*. Among his other works, one of the more important is his defense of Christianity against Judaism in *Concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion*.³⁰ He also wrote a *History of the Inquisition* which received wide acclaim and was translated into English.³¹ This work is indicative of Limborch's interest in the subject of toleration which he favored in England as well as the Netherlands. In 1693, Limborch published seventeen more sermons by Episcopius and added to it a biography of Episcopius. It came out in a Latin edition in 1701.³² His last major publication was a commentary on Acts, Romans and Hebrews.³³ Kitto, according to

²⁶ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 7:90: "He had many friends of distinguished learning, both in his own country and in foreign parts, as appears by the letters which he received and wrote."

²⁷ Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 28. Harrison, *Arminianism*, p. 118 maintains that Limborch "brought Remonstrant teaching into the main current of European thought and Le Clerc kept it there."

²⁸ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana, ad praxim pietatis ac promotionem pacis christianae unice directa* (Amsterdam, 1686, 1695, 1700, 1715, 1730, and 1735). It was abridged, translated into English and revised "with improvements from Bishop Wilkins, Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Scott, and others" by William Jones, *Body of Divinity* in 1712. All translations from this work are mine though I have often consulted Jones' translation. The 1700 edition is utilized.

²⁹ H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1943), 1:87. Similar judgments in almost the same language may be found in C. R. Barnes, "Limborch," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, ed. J. McClintock and J. Strong (New York: Harper & Bro., Pub., 1883), 5:4326; A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism*, p. 117; and K. R. Hagenbach, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, trans. E. H. Plumptre (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), 3:24.

³⁰ Limborch, *De Veritate Religioinis Christianae amica Collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Gouda: Justum ab Hoeve, 1687). It was translated into Dutch in 1723. This is usually taken to be a veiled refutation of Spinoza, cf. Colie, *Light*, p. 109.

³¹ Limborch, *Historia Inquisitionis, cui subjungitur liber sententiarum Inquisitionis tholosanae, ab anno CDCCCVII ad CDCCXXIII* (Amsterdam: H. Wetstenium, 1692). It was translated by Samuel Chandler and printed at London in 1731 (2 vols.).

³² Limborch, *Historie vitae S. Episcopii* (Amsterdam: Gengium Callet, 1701).

³³ Limborch, *Commentari in Acta apostolorum et in Epistolas ad Romanos et ad Hebraeos* (Rotterdam: Bernardum Bos., 1711). A Dutch translation appeared in 1725.

Barnes, gave it high praise. He states that the "commentary, written in the interest of the author's theological views, is deserving of attention for the good sense, clear thought, and acute reasoning by which it is pervaded."³⁴ In terms of Limborch's theological views, his *Theologia Christiana* is by far the most concise and important work. Nevertheless, the other works indicate Limborch's major areas of concern and interest. This is especially true of his Commentary which selects books that are related to the issues of his day.³⁵

The relationship between the original theology of Arminius and the developed Remonstrant thought of Limborch is the subject of this dissertation. By an exposition of each theologian, the content and nature of that relationship can be appreciated.

The Problem

"Arminianism" is a broad term. Towards the end of his dissertation, Carl Bangs notes the ambiguity of the term. He argues that it can have three different senses.³⁶

It can mean the theological position of Arminius himself. It can mean some kind of protest against Calvinism. It can mean a rallying point for dissent under the banner of toleration. Confusion results when these possible meanings are not clearly distinguished.

It is important to note that the term "Arminianism" in theological literature is used both for the theology of Arminius himself and for anyone who opposes the theology of Calvinism.³⁷ Thus, any opposition to Calvinism may be labeled "Arminian" whether that opposition is Socinian, Pelagian or Evangelical. Consequently, the general reader, and often the scholar, begins to equate almost any and every critique of Calvinism with the theology of Arminius.

The problem of this thesis is to understand the relationship between the original theology of Jacobus Arminius and the developed theology of Remonstrantism. In this thesis "Arminian" is used in its strictest sense, that is, the theology of Arminius himself, and the term "Remonstrant" is used for that system of theology which arose in the Netherlands after the death of Arminius. In particular, "Remonstrantism" refers to the theological system of Limborch who was its major theologian in the late seventeenth century. What, then, is the relationship between Arminianism and Remonstrantism? Is there an essential difference between the two, or are they fundamentally one in terms of their theology of grace?

Equation

³⁴ Barnes, "Limborch," 5:436

³⁵ Those issues include baptism (Acts), justification (Romans) and the doctrine of atonement (Hebrews).

³⁶ Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 249.

³⁷ In some instances, Arminianism has become synonymous with liberalism or universalism See Lambertus Jacobus van Holk, "From Arminius to Arminianism in Dutch Theology," in *Man's Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 27-45.

Some generally equate the two. There is an assumption that Arminianism and Remonstrantism are fundamentally Socinian in character. For instance, when Orr differentiates between Arminianism and Wesleyanism, he places Arminianism on the side of Socinianism:³⁸

Arminianism thus tended to a type of doctrine but little different from Socinianism, for which it prepared the way in both Holland and England. Wesleyanism, in the latter country, is sometimes classed with Arminianism; but it essentially differs from it in the central place it gives to the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration.

Another example is Mangelot who equates, in some sense, Arminianism with Pelagianism:³⁹

This doctrine accords, in part, with those of Catholicism on predestination and the necessity of grace, but it approaches Pelagianism on the subject of the efficacy of grace.

Arminianism and Remonstrantism are classed, then, in the same category as Socinianism and Pelagianism. This general assumption that Arminianism and Remonstrantism are the same system accounts for the many treatments of Arminius in terms of the "Remonstrance" of 1610 or his successors. Bangs cites an excellent example of this type of thinking in an 1860 B.D. thesis by J. J. E. Keller. It is entitled *Dieu et l'Homme d'apres Calvin et d'apres Arminius*, but devotes most of its pages to a discussion of Episcopius. Bangs comments that the "habit of viewing Arminius in the context of the seventeenth century accounts for a great deal of the perplexity expressed by those who read Arminius but who do not find there what is expected of an Arminian."⁴⁰ Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," *Church History* 30 (June 1961): 156.

This interpretation of Arminius' theology is represented in all traditions. Some "Arminians" regard him as fundamentally Remonstrant in character by attributing to him the denial of both the imputation of Adamic guilt and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. They wish to claim for themselves the true heritage of Arminius.⁴¹ Some Reformed interpreters also equate Remonstrantism and Arminianism. The best example may be an article by Meeuwsen. His thesis is that Arminius stands with the Remonstrants rather than with Wesley. Thus, Arminius' theology was not evangelical, but Remonstrant in character.⁴² These interpreters argue that the theologies of Arminius and Limborch are fundamentally the same.

³⁸ James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, reprint n.d.), p. 300

³⁹ E. Mangelot, "Arminius," in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangelot (Paris, 1930), 1:1971: "Cette doctrine s'accorde en partie avec celle des catholiques sur la predestination et la necessite de la grace, mais elle se rapproche der pelagianisme au sujet de l'efficacete de la grace." Whenever an new translation is given in the text, the original text will be given in a footnote. Otherwise, the source of the citation is itself a translation.

⁴⁰ Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," *Church History* 30 (June 1961): 156.

⁴¹ See D. D. Whedon "Arminianism and Arminius," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 61 (July 1879): 405-426.

⁴² James Meeuwsen, "Original Arminianism and Methodistic Arminianism Compared," *Reformed Review* 14.1 (1960): 21-36.

Logical Entailment

Others recognize some important differences between Arminianism and Remonstrantism, but argue that there is a logical connection between the two. It is argued that while Arminius did not hold to all the later tenets of Remonstrantism, his positions logically entailed the later developments. Dorner maintains, for instance, that the "logical sequence of the Arminian tendency lies in Socinianism, which arose indeed already in the sixteenth century."⁴³ Charles Hodge, the systematizer of American Orthodox Presbyterianism, also sees this logical relationship between Arminianism and Remonstrantism. He writes:⁴⁴

His departures from the Reformed doctrines in which he had been educated were far less serious than those of his successors, although involving them, apparently, by a logical necessity...The aberration of the Arminians, however, from the faith of the Reformed churches, extended to all doctrines connected with the plan of salvation. Arminius himself, at least, held far higher and more Scriptural views on original sin, inability, and the necessity of supernatural grace, than those which have since become so prevalent even among the Reformed or Calvinistic churches themselves. In matters concerning the method of salvation, especially as to the nature of Christ's work and its application to the believer, they at first adhered closely to the language of the Reformed confessions.

Arminius was, according to this interpretation, at best an incomplete thinker in the movement from Calvinism to Arminianism, or at least an individual who secretly held certain dogmas which he did not make public.⁴⁵ His disciples simply developed the logical implications of his own system, or openly taught what Arminius would not.

Radical Distinction

Others argue that there is a radical difference between Arminianism and Remonstrantism. H. Y. Groenewegen, an early twentieth century Dutch Remonstrant, recognized this distinction.⁴⁶

⁴³ J. A. Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, trans. George Robson and Sophia Taylor (New York: AMS Press, reprinted 1970 from 1871 ed.), 1:427. Note his comment on Wesleyan thought in comparison with Arminianism, 2:92: "Methodism was on the whole far more removed, as far as saving doctrines were concerned, from Arminianism, than from the old Reformed System."

⁴⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted 1977), 3:185, 187.

⁴⁵ Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," p. 156 gives three examples of this approach: A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (London, 1879), p. 105; Roger Nicole, *Christianity Today* 4 (October 12, 1959): 6; and A. Warburton, *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), pp. 49ff. See also Pieter Geyl, *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century. Part One: 1609-1648*, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961), p. 45: "His was no fighting nature, and exposed as he was to a formidable heresy hunt by the grim and explosive Gomarus and the great majority of the ministry, it is not surprising that he twisted those views, which he yet could not bring himself to renounce, into words approaching as nearly as possible to accepted opinion."

Remonstrantism is less dependent on and less closely bound to the Remonstrance and Arminius than are Calvinism to Calvin and Lutheranism to Luther. Above his person, his life's work, his theology, and his faith stands the spirit [of toleration] in which he performed his task and the principles for which he was merely the first great fighter.

Other interpreters of Arminius have agreed with Groenewegen's assessment. For instance, Farrar recognized that Arminius and Wesley were to be classed together while Episcopius and Limborch belonged among the English Latitudinarians and Socinians.⁴⁷

In fact, many interpreters see Arminius as standing within the same theological tradition as the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century. Clarke, for instance, concludes that:⁴⁸

Arminius stands in the main stream of Reformation thought. He is no more a forerunner of the liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than Luther is, or Calvin. It was partly the accidents of history, and partly the fact that those who continued to call themselves by his name nevertheless abandoned many of his doctrines, which made some later 'Arminians' pioneers of liberal theology.

In the nineteenth century, the Reformed theologian Moses Stuart also came to a similar conclusion. He writes:⁴⁹

In short, Arminius himself, to use the language of the present times, was merely a moderate Calvinist; and moderate too in a very limited degree; for on most points, he seems to have been altogether as strenuous as Calvin himself.

Among modern interpreters both Howard A. Slaatte⁵⁰ and Bangs⁵¹ argue that Arminius has more continuity with the Protestant Reformers than with his successors. In particular, Bangs does not regard Arminius' theology as a departure from Reformed theology except in the order of the decrees.

There are, then, basically three positions concerning the relationship between Arminianism and Remonstrantism. The first group regards them as essentially the same. The second admits several major differences, but maintains that there is a logical connection between them so that Arminius' position may be reduced to that of the Remonstrants. The third group maintains that there is a radical difference between the two systems. The problem of this thesis is to judge which group is correct in their

⁴⁶ H. Y. Groenewegen, "Arminius en de Remonstrantie," in *De Remonstranten: Gedenkboek bij het 300-jarig bestaan der Remonstrantsche Broederschap*, ed. G. J. Heering (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, n.d. {1919}), p. 62, cited and translated by Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 28.

⁴⁷ Adam Storey Farrar, *A Critical History of Free Thought in Reference to the Christian Religion* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1863), p. 392: "The study of Arminius' writings (see J. Nichols' translation, 1825) shows that he was not a Pelagian, if even his successors were."

⁴⁸ F. Stuart Clarke, "The Theology of Arminius," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 185.4 (1960): 251.

⁴⁹ Moses Stuart, "The Creed of Arminius," *Biblical Repository* 1 (April 1831): 304.

⁵⁰ Howard A. Slaatte, *The Arminian Arm of Theology: The Theologies of John Fletcher, First Methodist Theologian, and His Precursor, James Arminius* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), p. 23: "James Arminius was simply a left-wing Calvinist!"

⁵¹ Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformed Theology," pp. 28ff.

assessments of the relationship between the theologies of Arminianism and Remonstrantism as represented by Arminius and Limborch respectively.

Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation is that the differences between Arminius and the Remonstrant theologian Limborch are of such a nature that they are logically incompatible. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to argue that the theology of Arminius logically entails the theology of Limborch. The framework and presuppositions of the two theologies are radically different. While there is development between the original thinking of Jacobus Arminius and the theology of the Remonstrant Brotherhood as exhibited in their leading systematizer Philip van Limborch, it is not a logical sequence of development. The former system does not imply or logically entail the later. The two systems are not the same.

Thus, when Arminius and Limborch are compared it is impossible to place them into the same narrow category. Rather, Arminius would better be classed with theologians of the Reformation than he would with Limborch. On the other hand, Limborch is better classified with Socinianism than with Arminius. The chasm which separates the theology of grace in Arminius and Limborch is the same chasm which separates the theology of grace in the Reformers of the sixteenth century and Oscines himself.

The cause of this polarization between Arminius and later Remonstrant thought is not the subject of this dissertation. Yet, it will be argued that the development is not the result of some "logical sequence" of thought within Arminius' theology, but is due to the influences external to his theology which modified the system internally. A parallel development may be found in Geneva. While Francis Turretin (1623-1687) lived, Calvinism reigned; but when his son, Jean-Alfonse Turretin (1671-1737), took the first chair of Church History in Geneva, Calvinism was dethroned. Instead, "the theology and spirit of the rationalist mood of the Enlightenment" dominated.⁵² In a similar way, it was not the logical framework inherent in Arminius' system which led to full-blown Remonstrantism, but it was the principles and spirit of the Enlightenment impinging upon Arminius' original thinking. Indeed, Remonstrantism may have had its beginning in the spirit of Erasmus himself rather than Arminius.

Method

The problem which persists in the running debate about the relationship between Arminianism and Remonstrantism is the lack of clear exposition of the respective theologies in relation to each other. Either Arminius is read in the light of later Remonstrant thought, or there is a real lack of understanding as to what the Remonstrants actually taught. The method of this dissertation seeks to alleviate this problem. The plan of the dissertation is to first expound Arminius' theology of grace, and then to expound the theology of grace in Philip van Limborch. Once the two systems are set forth, then a careful comparison of the two is possible. Both systems will be discussed

⁵² Richard C. Gamble, "Switzerland: Triumph and Decline," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 71.

comprehensively so that their similarities as well as differences will be apparent. In this way, it will become clear that the theologies of grace in Arminius and Limborch are fundamentally different in terms of their content and framework.

Arminius is chosen as the representative of original Arminianism for obvious reasons. He was, after all, the founder of the theological movement known as "Arminianism." Philip van Limborch is chosen as the representative of Remonstrant thought because he was the first to write a comprehensive system of theology for the Remonstrant Brotherhood. Limborch was the quintessence of Remonstrantism. He possessed a thorough knowledge of earlier Remonstrant thinkers as well as Arminius himself. He edited the known letters of his predecessors in one volume, three collections of Episcopius' sermons, one volume of Episcopius' *Opera* and the *Opera* of his major professor Curcellaeus. As a second generation Remonstrant, he is eminently qualified to represent Remonstrant thought in general. In fact, as Professor of Theology in Amsterdam for forty-five years and the author of *Theologia Christiana*, he was the most influential Remonstrant thinker within the Brotherhood in the seventeenth century. Limborch, therefore, is the best representative of developed Remonstrantism. There is no other single Remonstrant theologian to whom it would be better to compare Arminius than Limborch.

The scope of this dissertation is limited to the theology of grace. The theology of grace is divided into four major areas: (1) its necessity; (2) its nature; (3) its ground; and (4) its appropriation. This division of the doctrine of grace highlights both the similarities and differences between Arminius and Limborch. The necessity of grace centers in the issue of man's need for grace. This entails a discussion of the effects of Adam's fall. The nature of grace involves a discussion of the role of free will and the nature of the Spirit's work in regeneration. The ground of grace centers in the issue of the doctrine of atonements and forensic imputation. The appropriation of grace revolves around the means of justification and the relation of faith and works. These issues are at the heart of the classic discussion between Pelagius and Augustine, and the Reformation dispute between the Reformers and Catholicism. It is in this context, then, that the distinction between Remonstrantism and Arminianism can best be illustrated.

The scope of the dissertation excludes a discussion of the issue of predestination. While this issue must not be overlooked in terms of the distinction between Calvinism and Arminianism, it does not provide a basis for distinction between various forms of Arminianism. Arminianism does not regard the affirmation that God elects believers in Christ as determinate for one's view of the necessity, nature, ground and appropriation of grace. The affirmation that God elects believers in Christ does not, in the view of Arminians, imply any particular view of grace. Thus, Limborch and Arminius may hold a similar view of predestination, but hold radically different views of the nature and ground of grace. Thus, any discussion of the distinctions within Arminianism must be based upon the ground (atonement) and application (faith) of grace rather than the motivating source of and decision to provide grace (predestination).

The method of the dissertation, then, is to concentrate upon the need, nature, ground and appropriation of grace within history rather than concentrating upon the order of the eternal decrees. From this perspective, it will become apparent that the theology of Arminius is that of the Reformers while the theology of Limborch belongs to the Semi-Pelagianism of Tridentine Catholicism or even the Pelagian tendencies of Socinianism.

CHAPTER II

The Nature and Necessity of Grace in Jacobus Arminius

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the nature and necessity of grace in the theology of Jacobus Arminius. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the role of grace in the Arminian system. Unfortunately, much of what has been written about Arminius himself has suffered from the fallacy of interpreting him in the light of later developments. Bangs notes this tendency at the beginning of his dissertation:⁵³

One may suspect many accounts of Arminius also to be guilty of the logical fallacy of post hoc ergo propter hoc. It seems to be concluded that since Arminius was followed by rationalism or by Socinianism he was the cause or the forerunner of these movements. Although such causality might conceivably be true, the evidence would have to consist of more than the argument from temporal sequence.

Such an approach to Arminius has distorted his meaning and original framework. This chapter and the next seek to re-examine the thought of Arminius in order to draw the contrast with later Remonstrant thought as represented by Philip van Limborch.⁵⁴

Man as Created

Man was created in the image of God. This image, according to Arminius, consisted of two parts. One is natural, the other is supernatural. The former is essential, the latter is accidental to man's humanity.⁵⁵ The natural and essential attributes of the divine image are those which belong to man as man. The supernatural and accidental attributes of man are those which man may possess or lack without destroying his humanity. He states this distinction in the following proposition:⁵⁶

The image and likeness of God, after which man was created, belongs partly to the very nature of man, so that without it man cannot be man; but it partly consists in those things which concern supernatural, heavenly and spiritual things. The former class comprises the understanding, the affections, and the will, which is free; but the latter, the knowledge of God and of things divine, righteousness, true holiness, &c.

⁵³ Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 23.

⁵⁴ There are a number of detailed synopses of Arminius' theology available. Some of the more important include: Stuart, "The Creed of Arminius," pp. 226-308; Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," pp. 77ff and Arminius, pp. 332-355; Robert T. Dell, "Man's Freedom and Bondage in the Thought of Martin Luther and James Arminius" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1962), pp. 142-217; and Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, pp. 5-69.

⁵⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputation," XXVI.viii, in *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1977), 2:64.

⁵⁶ Arminius, "Certain Articles," VI.v, in *Writings*, 2:486. Arminius also defends this distinction against Francis Junius, see "Discussion with F. Junius," X, in *Writings*, 3:116-133.

Thus, Arminius argues that God endowed man with both natural and supernatural gifts at his creation. Both of these gifts comprise the image of God in man, and they are particularly exhibited in the soul.⁵⁷

The faculty of the soul is two-fold: the intellect and the will. Arminius argues that the intellect apprehends truth "by a natural and necessary" act, but that the will is free. However, the will, as created in man, "has an inclination (propendet) to good."⁵⁸ In the primitive state, man's intellect or understanding was endowed with "wisdom, by which the intellect clearly and sufficiently understood the super natural truth and goodness both of felicity and of righteousness." At the same time, the will was endowed with righteousness and holiness of truth, by which the will was (apta) fitted and ready to follow what this wisdom commanded to be done, and what it shewed to be desired." Arminius has no difficulty in calling these concreated endowments "original righteousness" since "man had them from his very origin, and because, if man had continued in his integrity, they would also had been communicated to his posterity."⁵⁹

Thus, in this "state of primitive innocence" man possessed an intellect endowed with divine understanding, and a will endowed with "powers abundantly (instructas) qualified or furnished perfectly to fulfill the law which God had imposed on him."⁶⁰ However, this state did not prevent the will from seeking an inferior good which brought about his condemnation. The will remained free and capable of good or evil though it was sufficiently informed and moved by the understanding to seek the highest good.⁶¹

The freedom of the will was essential to the covenantal relationship which God had established between himself and Adam. According to Arminius, God established a covenant with Adam in which he commanded a work, promised a reward and threatened a punishment.⁶² God's covenant with Adam not only included the natural law with which he had endowed created man but also a "symbolical" or positive law. The latter law was given so that God "may try whether man is willing to yield obedience to him, solely on this account."⁶³ If Adam obeyed both the natural and positive laws, then he had the promise of eternal glory. Despite the inaccurate criticisms of others,⁶⁴ man, as long as he

⁵⁷ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXVI.vii, in *Writings*, 2:64 argues that the image of God also includes man's body in that it is "something divine." It is divine in the sense that it would have never died if Adam had not sinned, and that it has the capacity of incorruptibility. Thus, the image of God actually pertains to the "whole person," but it consists chiefly in the substance, faculties and habits of the soul.

⁵⁸ Ibid., XXVI.v, in *Writings*, 2:63.

⁵⁹ Ibid., XXVI.vi, in *Writings*, 2:63-64.

⁶⁰ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XI.v, in *Writings*, 1:525.

⁶¹ Ibid., XI.vi, in *Writings*, 1:526.

⁶² Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXIX.i, in *Writings*, 2:71. This covenant also included Adam's posterity in the sense that the same covenant would have pertained to them if Adam never sinned, see also XXIX.ix, in *Writings*, 2:73.

⁶³ Ibid., XXIX.iv, in *Writings*, 2:72.

⁶⁴ Louis Praamsma, "The Background of the Arminian Controversy (1586-1618)," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, ed. Peter Y. DeJong (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship Inc., 1968), p. 27 approvingly quotes Triglandius, Kerckelijcke Geschiedenissen (1650), p. 283, who states that Arminius, while expounding Romans 5 and 6 "taught that death would have been inevitable even if man had never sinned, since God alone is immortal."

obeyed, possessed an accidental immortality and would have been translated into heaven if he had never sinned.⁶⁵ Arminius explicitly states that "if man had not sinned, his body would have never died."⁶⁶

Fallen Man

The Sin of Adam

Arminius indomitably insists that the sin of Adam was a free act on his part which was unfettered by any kind of necessity.⁶⁷ Free will was capable of evil without any necessary compulsion from within or without. There was nothing outside of man's nature which irresistibly moved him to sin. Neither was there anything within man's nature that moved him in any necessary way. Rather, man "sinned by his free will, his own proper motion being allowed by God, and himself persuaded by the devil."⁶⁸

The immediate effect of Adam's sin was the bringing of guilt and punishment upon himself personally. He was subjected to temporal and eternal death. This is indicated by his ejection from the garden of Eden which was a "token" of both his temporal and eternal death. The former because "Paradise was a type and figure of the celestial abode," and the latter because in it was the tree of life which was "both a symbol of the heavenly life of which man was bereft, and of death eternal, which was to follow."⁶⁹ In addition to liability to these two deaths, Adam also lost his "original righteousness" which was the presence of the Holy Spirit. This was the "withdrawal (privatio) of that primitive righteousness and holiness, which, because they are the effects of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man, ought not to have remained in him after he had fallen from the favor of God, and had incurred the Divine displeasure."⁷⁰ Therefore, Adam rendered himself liable to both temporal and eternal death, and lost his primitive righteousness before God.

Adam's sin, however, did not affect himself alone, but the sin "is common to the entire race and to all their posterity." The same punishments which fell upon Adam and Eve pertain to their descendents. He states his position clearly in his "Public Disputations":⁷¹

For in Adam "all have sinned." (Rom. v, 12.) Wherefore, whatever punishment was brought down upon our first parents, has likewise pervaded and yet pursues all their posterity. So that all men "are by nature the children of wrath," (Ephes. ii, 3,) obnoxious to condemnation, and to temporal as well as to eternal death; they are also devoid of that original righteousness and holiness.

⁶⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXVI.ix, in *Writings*, 2:64: "But the immortality of the body is entirely supernatural and accidental; for it can be taken away from the body, and the body can return to the dust, from which it was taken."

⁶⁶ Ibid., XXVI.vii, in *Writings*, 2:64.

⁶⁷ Arminius, "Public Disputations," VII.iv, in *Writings*, 1:481.

⁶⁸ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXX.vi, in *Writings*, 2:75-76.

⁶⁹ Ibid., XXXI.vii, *Writings*, 2:78.

⁷⁰ Arminius, "Public Disputations," VII.xv, in *Writings*, 1:485.

⁷¹ Ibid., VII.xvi, in *Writings*, 1:486.

Arminius is not referring to the result of the descendants own actual sins, but is explaining the effect of Adam's own actual sin upon them. It was on the basis of Adam's sin alone that "all men, who were to be propagated from them in a natural way, became obnoxious to death temporal and death eternal, and devoid (*vacui*) of this gift of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness." It is this condition which is called "original sin" or the "privation of the image of God."⁷² While it is essentially a privation, it does involve an "original propensity of our nature towards that which is contrary to the divine law, which propensity we have contracted from our first parents, through carnal generation."⁷³

The Condition of Fallen Man

Arminius' definition of original sin implies the bondage of the will to sin. The will is bound over to sin. This bondage is sufficiently explained by the destitution of primitive innocence. A man in the state of nature, "destitute of grace and of the Spirit of God, tends directly downward to those things which are earthly."⁷⁴ When Adam lost his original righteousness, it incurred a condition in which his intellect is incapable and his will is unwilling to move him to do any true good. Arminius summarizes his position in his "Public Disputations":⁷⁵

In this state, the free will of man towards the true good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and weakened (*attenuatum*); but it is also imprisoned (*captivatum*), destroyed, and lost. And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they are assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as is excited by Divine grace. For Christ has said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

In another place, Arminius states:⁷⁶

This is my opinion concerning the Free-will of man: *In his primitive condition* as he came out of the hands of his Creator, man was endowed with such a portion of knowledge, holiness and power, as

⁷² Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXXI.ix, in *Writings*, 2:79. Arminius questioned whether the privation of original righteousness was sufficient to account for original sin or whether there was some contrary quality in man which moved him to sin in addition to the privation of original righteousness. He did not consider the issue substantive though he preferred the first alternative as the best one. See "Private Disputations, XXXI.x, in *Writings*, 2:79; and "Certain Articles," XII.ii, in *Writings*, 2:492. Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 340 argues that such a position is "not explicitly contrary to the received Lutheran and Reformed confessions of the time...[which] do not distinguish between the negative and positive aspects of this corruption." Bangs singles out the Formula of Concord, article 1 and the Belgic Confession, article 15. Whether Bangs is correct or not, the result in Arminius' theology is essentially the same as traditionally Reformed descriptions of fallen man.

⁷³ Arminius, "Public Disputations," VIII.xiii, in *Writings*, 1:492.

⁷⁴ Arminius, "Apology," XV, in *Writings*, 1:323. Cf. also "Public Disputations," XI.iii, in *Writings*, 1:525: "The states of conditions are likewise three, that of *primitive innocence*, in which God placed him by creation; that of *subsequent corruption*, into which he fell through sin when destitute of primitive innocence; and, lastly, that of *renewed righteousness*, to which state he is restored by the grace of Christ."

⁷⁵ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XI.vii, in *Writings*, 1:526.

⁷⁶ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," III, in *Writings*, 1:252, 253.

enabled him to understand, esteem consider, will, and to perform the true good, according to the commandment delivered to him. Yet none of these acts could he do, *except through the assistance of Divine grace* [the supernatural gifts]. But in his *lapsed and sinful state*, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing and doing that which is good, but yet *not without the continued aids of Divine Grace*.

Stuart comments that the "most thorough advocate of total depravity will scarcely venture to go farther in regard to" unregenerate man than Arminius does in the above statement.⁷⁷

Arminius' statements concerning fallen man refer to three aspects of man's nature which are depraved or corrupted. The first aspect is the mind or intellect. He argues that the unregenerate mind of man is "dark, destitute [of] the saving knowledge of God, and, according to the Apostle incapable of those things which belong to the Spirit." Consequently, the *anima* of man regards the external preaching of the Gospel as "foolishness." Man is incapable, due to the darkness of his intellect, to perceive the wisdom of God in the Gospel without the aid of grace.⁷⁸ The second aspect is the affections or will of the heart. The unregenerate heart of man is so per verse that "it hates and has an aversion to that which is truly good and pleasing to God; but it loves and pursues what is evil." It is wholly given over to evil, and inclined so thoroughly that it can do nothing else.⁷⁹ The third aspect is the impotence of man's state. As a result of the dark ness of the mind and perverseness of the heart, and exactly corresponding to it, there is "the utter weakness (*impotentia*) of all the powers to perform that which is truly good, and to omit the perpetration of that which is evil, in a due mode and from a due end and cause." Man is impotent in the fallen state.⁸⁰

The conclusion is evident. Arminius does not believe that man in the fallen state possess a free will if "free will" means that one is actually able to do and will any true good. He concludes his discussion of the unregenerate state with this argument:⁸¹

Therefore, if "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" (2 Cor. iii, 17;) and if those alone be "free indeed whom the Son hath made free;" (John viii, 36;) it follows, that our will is not free from the first fall; that is, it is not free to good, unless it be made free by the Son through the Spirit.

⁷⁷ Stuart, "Creed of Arminius," p. 271. He immediately adds that since Arminius "extends renovation to all the faculties of man, even to understanding, I believe that on this point Arminius would find few among the orthodox of the present day that would keep pace with him. Surely he cannot be accused of laxity on this matter" (pp. 271, 272). Clarke, "Arminius," p. 249: "But there is little difference between his description of the fallen state of man and Calvin's."

⁷⁸ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XI.viii, in *Writings*, 1:526-527.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, XI.ix, in *Writings*, 1:527.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XI.x, in *Writings*, 1:527-528.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, XI.xi, in *Writings*, 1:528.

Consequently, Arminius does not hold, as Dell mistakenly argues, "both freedom of the will and bondage in sin" if that freedom means a will to do good.⁸² Rather, he holds that the will is captivated, destroyed and lost by the fall of Adam. While the will retains an ability to choose between one thing or another, it is nevertheless an ability which is imprisoned by sin. Thus, unregenerate man still retains freedom (and he must since it is one of his essential attributes), but only a freedom to sin due to the nature of his bondage. Clarke correctly summarizes Arminius' position in this comment:⁸³

This quotation ["Public Disputations," XI.vii, in *Writings*, I, p. 526] shows how false is the popular idea that Arminianism is the belief in free will, if by that we mean a belief in the free will of the natural man to do good. Arminius would have sided with Luther against Erasmus, in asserting the bondage of the will in the natural state of man. Equally false is the contention of some Calvinist critics that Arminianism gravely underestimates the crippling effect of sin on man's powers. But Arminius insists that the human will is not completely destroyed. It is bound by sin, and may later be set free by grace.

The freedom of the will is destroyed in terms of the bondage, but the will remains, within its essence, free. Meta physically, man can do good, but his will is so bound to sin that it will not do good.

The Imputation of Guilt

A second implication of Arminius' definition of original sin is the damnation of infants. Original sin is the penalty of Adam's actual sin, and it is a penalty which extends to all his descendants. Despite clear statements to the contrary, Arminius was often accused of not holding to the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. Many passages demonstrate that this is not the case. For instance, in his dissertation on Romans 7, he states that "all who are born in the ordinary way from Adam, contract from him original sin and the penalty of death eternal."⁸⁴ In his discussion with Junius, Arminius argues that "the law, which was given to Adam, was enacted for all, which is evident from the fact that all sinned in Adam, and became guilty of transgression."⁸⁵ Arminius explicitly affirms that God imputed "the guilt of the first sin to all the posterity of Adam, no less than to Adam himself and to Eve, because they also sinned in Adam."⁸⁶ In response to the question whether "original sin, of itself, render[s] a man obnoxious (*reum*) to eternal death, even without the addition of any actual sin," Arminius argues that since "a participation of Christ's benefits consists in faith alone, it follows that, if among these benefits 'deliverance from this guilt' be one, believers only are delivered from it, since

⁸² Dell, "Man's Freedom and Bondage," p. 148.

⁸³ Clarke, "Arminius," p. 249.

⁸⁴ Arminius, "Dissertation on Romans 7," III.ii.3, in *Writings*, 2:390. In the context Arminius was distinguishing himself from Pelagianism.

⁸⁵ Arminius, "Discussion with F. Junius," XIV, in *Writings*, 3:167. Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, p. 37, argues that Arminius "may be said to have believed in the Augustinian, Traducian theory of the carnal or biological means of the transmission of sin."

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIV, in *Writings*, 3:249.

they are those upon whom the wrath of God does not abide."⁸⁷ Consequently, since unbaptized infants are neither believers nor part of the covenant of grace, they fall under the wrath of God. In fact, after detailing the effects of Adam's sin in terms of being "obnoxious to condemnation, and to temporal as well as eternal death," Arminius makes this further comment: "With these evils they would remain oppressed forever, unless they were liberated by Christ Jesus; to whom be glory forever."⁸⁸ Consequently, in 1857 Warren correctly observed that Arminius held "*to the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to all men.*"⁸⁹ Stuart also gives his personal testimony that he has "met with no orthodoxy of a higher type than that of Arminius, on this much contested point."⁹⁰ It is only believers and their children who are liberated under the new covenant. Thus, it seems clear that Arminius did not advocate the salvation of all infants. He affirmed the possibility that they might be saved, but only on the basis of Christ's work. Nevertheless, in their natural condition, they are under the penalty of eternal death, and they will remain there unless they come under the new covenant. Arminius affirms, as Bangs correctly understands him, that the guilt of original sin "can be but [that] it is not" taken away from all men.⁹¹

Arminius was often accused of believing that all infants would be saved on the ground that original sin did not entail the punishment of eternal death. This accusation has not abated.⁹² This is clearly not the case. Even if Arminius believed that unbaptized infants would be saved, that does not imply that he did not believe original sin to be damnatory. Rather, it would simply imply that the grace of God would save them for the sake of Christ. However, there is no evidence to demonstrate that this was Arminius' position. It was, admittedly, the position of many of his friends and associates. Indeed, some of Arminius' opponents accused him of a proposition which had, in fact, been affirmed by one of Arminius' close friends, Adrian Borrius.⁹³ He treats Borrius' opinion with sympathy, but stops short of endorsing its premises and conclusions.⁹⁴ Arminius believed two essential points about the state of infants: first, that infants are born under

⁸⁷ Arminius, "Nine Questions," III, in *Writings*, 1:381-382.

⁸⁸ Arminius, "Public Disputations," VII.xvi, in *Writings*, 2:486.

⁸⁹ W. F. Warren, "Arminius," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 39 (July 1857): 357.

⁹⁰ Stuart, "Creed of Arminius," p. 290.

⁹¹ Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 155.

⁹² See George L. Curtiss, *Arminianism in History* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1894), p. 12: "As to original sin, Arminius teaches that man, descending from Adam, has been corrupted by Adam's sin, but is not guilty. Adam was both guilty and corrupted. No one will ever be lost in perdition because of Adam's transgression, but all are in the bondage of corruption, because of the sin of the federal head." See also William G. T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Scribner's, 1867), 2:181-183. It is repeated by James Meeuwse, "Original Arminianism," pp. 21-24.

⁹³ Arminius, "Apology," XIII and XIV, in *Writings*, 1:317-321.

⁹⁴ Arminius, "Apology," XIII and XIV, in *Writings*, 1:321 refers to the opinion of Francis Junius who presumed "through charity" that those infants dying outside of the covenant were saved. Arminius notes Junius' position to demonstrate that Borrius' opinion remains within the Reformed tradition as long as it is held that the infants are saved by the intervention of Christ. At no point does Arminius endorse either position. Rather, he always affirms that infants bear the guilt of Adam's sin. The fact that all infants would be saved by Christ is a possibility he entertains but never affirms.

the penalty of both eternal and temporal death, and second, that if they are saved, they are saved by Christ. There is no concept of "innocence" in Arminius with respect to the natural descendents of Adam.

In summary, Arminius argues that that "original sin" is essentially a deprivation of original righteousness. It rendered all men liable to temporal and eternal death apart from any personal, actual sins. This fallen predicament is also the cause of all other sins in man.⁹⁵ In this state, man is wholly bound over to sin and is unable of himself to understand, will or perform any true good. Bangs correctly observes that Arminius' main point is that:⁹⁶

the recipient of evangelical grace is a sinner in desperate straits, involved and caught in the consequences of Adam's sin. His acts of sin are not mere free choices in imitation of bad example but the result of the predicament of man in the fall.

Special Grace

Arminius places little stress upon the concept of "common grace." Arminius' polemic works almost always pertain to special or saving grace. In the fallen state, man is destitute of all grace which pertains to salvation. Embroiled in the controversies which plagued him, Arminius was forced to think specifically and almost exclusively about the nature and mode of special grace. He seems to never have seriously considered the role of common grace in his published writings.⁹⁷

The Divine Vocation

Being the good Ramist he was, Arminius had a propensity to treat all subjects dialectically.⁹⁸ He never lacked for an abundance of divisions, and the subject of special grace is no exception. Arminius usually approached the subject of saving grace from the perspective of divine calling. It is under this heading that one finds Arminius' most detailed explanations of grace.

⁹⁵ Ibid., XXXI, in *Writings*, 1:375: "I said, I did not deny that it was sin, but it was not actual sin. And I quoted the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which the Apostle treats on the sin, and says that "it produces in the unregenerate all manner of concupiscence," thus intimating that we must distinguish between actual sin, and that which was the cause of other sins, and which, on this very account, might be denominated 'sin.'"

⁹⁶ Bangs, *Arminius*, p.340.

⁹⁷ Even in his discussions of divine providence, the emphasis is upon the nature of contingency and necessity in God's government and not upon the common benefits God gives to all men. See Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXVIII, in *Writings*, 2:68-70. Neither do any of the detailed expositions of Arminius devote any large space to the role of common grace in the theology of Arminius. His controversies were almost exclusively related to special grace. There was, apparently, little time to write about the complex issues of common grace.

⁹⁸ Bangs, *Arminius*, pp. 56-63 details the nature of Petrus Ramus's philosophical thought and its influence upon Arminius. See also Joannes Tideman, "Remonstrantisme en Ramisme," *Studien en Bijdragen ap't Gebied der Historische Theologie* 3 (1876): 389-429 and F. P. Graves, *Peter Ramus and the Educational Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: MacMillian Co., 1912).

Arminius offers this definition of the divine calling in his "Public Disputations":⁹⁹ [It is] a gracious act of God in Christ by which, through his word and Spirit, He calls forth sinful men, who are liable to condemnation and placed under the dominion of sin, from the condition of the animal life, and from the pollutions and corruptions of this world...unto "the fellowship of Jesus Christ," and of his kingdom and its benefits; that, being united unto Him as their Head, they may derive from him life, sensation (*sensum*), motion, and a plentitude of every spiritual blessing, to the glory of God and their own salvation.

Within this definition, Arminius distinguishes between several causations. God the Father in the Son is the efficient cause. The instrumental cause is ordinarily the Word of God rendered efficacious by the Spirit of God, but the extraordinary cause is the immediate work of the Spirit without the Word. The object of vocation is sinful, natural man. The end of vocation is the salvation of sinful man. The accidental result of vocation is the rejection of grace by man. These distinctions deserve closer attention.

The Role of Father and Son. God the Father is the efficient cause of vocation, but he only calls in his Son. The Father is moved to call men on the basis of two principles: (1) the antecedent or "inly-moving" cause, and (2) the disposing cause. Both of these causes relate to the decision to elect believers. The antecedent cause is the grace and mercy of God by which he is "inclined to succor the misery of sinful man."¹⁰⁰ This is directly related to what Arminius calls the antecedent will of God in his discussion with Perkins. There he argues that the will of God "may be called antecedent, by which he wills anything in relation to the creation...previous to any act of the creature whatever, or to any particular act of it." In this way, according to Arminius, God "willed that all men and each of them should be saved."¹⁰¹ Thus, the moving cause of vocation is God's love toward all men. However, this must be conjoined with the disposing cause of vocation which is "the wisdom and the justice of God, by which he knows the method by which it is proper for this vocation to be administered, and by which he wills to dispense it as it is proper and right."¹⁰² This relates directly to Arminius' concept of atonement. He willed that the Son should be a mediator between himself and man. Only in this way could the justice of God consent to the redeeming of sinful man. At the same time, God wills that only believers will participate in the benefits of this mediatorship. Thus, it is the consequent will of God that Jesus should stand as surety for all believers, and that all unbelievers should stand condemned "because he does not will that his own righteousness should perish."¹⁰³

Arminius elsewhere calls the obedience of Jesus Christ the "external cause" which moves the Father, as a consequence, to will the salvation of believers.¹⁰⁴ It is the Son,

⁹⁹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XVI.ii, in *Writings*, 1:570.

¹⁰⁰ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLII.iii, in *Writings*, 2:104.

¹⁰¹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:463. The antecedent will of God is to be distinguished from the consequent will of God. Arminius draws this distinction from Damascenus, see "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:462.

¹⁰² Arminius, "Private Disputation," XLII.iii, in *Writings*, 2:104.

¹⁰³ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:464.

¹⁰⁴ Arminius, "Public Disputation," XVI.v, in *Writings*, 1:571.

then, as Mediator and King of his church, who "calls men by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁵ The vocation is moved by the Father, and it finds its origin in him, but it is the Son through the Spirit who actually carries it forward. The Father antecedently wills, according to his mercy, to save all men, but wills consequently, according to his justice, to save only believers through his Son. It is the Son through the Holy Spirit who administers this will to call men unto salvation.

The Role of the Spirit and Word. Arminius strongly insists that the Holy Spirit himself is the "effector."¹⁰⁶ God is the efficient cause, but it is the Spirit who renders the call efficacious in the application of redemption. Thus, the Father is the efficient cause in the sense of the antecedent and consequent wills only. The Spirit, moved by the Father's will, actually renders the call efficacious. The instrumental cause of his work is the Word of God as the "*ordinary* method." But the "*extraordinary*" call, which is "without human assistance [preaching], when the word is immediately proposed by God inwardly to the mind and the will," is sometimes employed by the Father.¹⁰⁷ The public ministry of the Word is the "external" vocation, and the inward and immediate work of the Spirit is the "internal" vocation. Normally, the two concur in efficacy.¹⁰⁸ But there may be instances where some are called to salvation without the external call though the two are "almost always joined."¹⁰⁹ He voices "high approval" of the following statement which, he says, is "in very common and frequent use":¹¹⁰

The ordinary means and instrument of conversion is the preaching of the Divine word by mortal men, to which therefore all persons are bound; but the Holy Spirit has not so bound himself to this method, as to be unable to operate in an extraordinary way, without the intervention of human aid when it seemeth good to Himself.

Yet, at every point, the internal work of the Spirit is necessary. There can be no conversion without the internal call. It may occur through the Word or apart from the Word, but it is the essence of the call. This internal operation of the Spirit illuminates the mind and gives affection to the heart "that serious attention may be given to those things which are spoken, and that faith (*fides*) or credence may be given to the word."¹¹¹ The public ministry of men is only "preparatory," but the inward work of the Spirit is

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., XVI.iii, in *Writings*, 1:570

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., XVI.iii, in *Writings*, 1:571.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., XVI.v, in *Writings*, 1:571.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., XVI.xi, in *Writings*, 1:573: "The efficacy consists in the concurrence of both the internal and external vocation."

¹⁰⁹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:334.

¹¹⁰ Arminius, "Apology," XVIII.iii, in *Writings*, 1:330-331. He argues that when God wills great numbers to be converted he "sends the external preaching of his word to nations" at his good pleasure, but that God is not bound by that external preaching. He appeals to Zwingli, and argues that it is not an error to maintain that "even without this means [without the preaching of the Word] God can convert some persons."

¹¹¹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XVI.xi, in *Writings*, 1:573. Arminius is careful to maintain that this illumination is not the revelation of some content beyond what is contained in the Word. By this qualification he distinguishes himself from the mystics and enthusiasts. See "Public Disputations," XVI.xiii, in *Writings*, 1:573-574.

"perfective" (*consummatorium*). The external Word alone is not sufficient. Rather, only the inward application of the Word of God by the Spirit can consummate God's call.¹¹²

The internal work of the Spirit is necessary since the objects of the divine call are men "constituted in their sensual (*animalis*) life, as worldly, natural, sensual, and sinful."¹¹³ Natural man is destitute of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and consequently his free will is destroyed and bound over to sin. The work of the Spirit is necessary to restore to man the ability to do true spiritual good. It is necessary to grant to man the will to believe.¹¹⁴ Arminius argues that the call of God is necessary "for the purpose of men being enabled to answer the Divine Vocation."¹¹⁵ Fallen man possesses the ability to believe in the sense that he possesses natural freedom.¹¹⁶ But this ability is bound over to sin. Man is metaphysically able to choose the good, but he is morally incapable of desiring or choosing it. He has no will to choose the good. Consequently, the internal work of the Spirit is necessary to move man's will.

The Internal Work of the Spirit. The nature of this internal work of the Spirit is direct and personal. Arminius often refers to it as an infusion. In his letter to Hippolytus, he argues that the grace of regeneration "infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and bends the will to carry into execution good thoughts and good desires."¹¹⁷ In another place, Arminius defines "grace" in three ways: (1) "*a gratuitous affection*;" (2) "*an infusion*"; and (3) "*perpetual assistance and continued aid of the Holy Spirit*." Under the category of infusion, Arminius writes:¹¹⁸

It is an infusion (both into the human understanding and into the will and affection) of all those gifts of the Holy Spirit which appertain to the regeneration and renewing of man--such as faith, hope, charity, &c.; for, without these gracious gifts, man is not sufficient to think, will, or do any thing that is good.

It is clear from these statements, and those on the nature of the internal Word, that Arminius was no simple moralist. Unfortunately, moralism is a common charge made against Arminius. For instance, Frederic Platt maintained that while Calvinists maintain that the work of the Spirit is "due to the immediate operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul," the Arminian position (including Arminius himself) asserts that the divine action is "mediate, through the truth, and thus moral and persuasive."¹¹⁹

¹¹² Ibid., XVI.xiii, in *Writings*, 1:573-574.

¹¹³ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLII.v, in *Writings*, 2:105.

¹¹⁴ Arminius, "Dissertation on Romans 7," III, in *Writings*, 2:390: "But it also teaches that the grace of Christ, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit and of love, is absolutely necessary for this purpose." Cf. "Letter to Hippolytus," IV, in *Writings*, 2:472: "I affirm, therefore, that this grace is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the due ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good."

¹¹⁵ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XVI.i, in *Writings*, 1:570.

¹¹⁶ Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, p. 31 recognizes this: "Much like Thomas Aquinas at this point, Arminius maintained that, despite the Fall, man is free and rational. Sin had destroyed neither freedom nor reason; otherwise man would not be man." But he adds that "man's free will is by no means sufficient in itself to do the will of God" (p. 55).

¹¹⁷ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," IV, in *Writings*, 2:472

¹¹⁸ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IV, in *Writings*, 1:253.

However, a more accurate picture of Arminius' position comes from Slaatte who argues that Arminius agreed with Aquinas, and later Wesley would agree with them both. Commenting on Arminius' concept of "infusion," he observes:¹²⁰

Here the Spirit is seemingly regarded as a kind of quasi-metaphysical substance or energy, though in keeping with the Old Testament *ruach* and New Testament *pneuma*. Calvin was not averse to this, but Luther was more apt to regard the Spirit of grace as solely a matter of man's new relation to God. Arminius, however, sees this new relation as opening the channels of divine power, the Holy Spirit himself; hence, the term "infusion" is deliberate.

Instead of a "quasi-metaphysical substance or energy," it is better to simply emphasize the personal presence of the Spirit.¹²¹ The person of the Spirit is immediately present to move the will. The fact that this is not an irresistible movement does not mitigate against Arminius' insistence upon that internal work. While it may be argued that Arminius was logically inconsistent for postulating an internal work of the Spirit which is resistible, whether or not this is the case should not determine what Arminius actually affirmed.

Consequently, it appears indisputable that Arminius believed in the personal, immediate and direct work of the Spirit as the real cause of regeneration. Stuart concludes his survey in this way:¹²²

Whatever were the faults or virtues of Arminius, neither the one nor the other consisted in his rejecting the doctrine of the entire depravity of the unregenerate man, or of the special influences of the Spirit of God; for it is clear as the light, that he did fully recognize the truth of both these doctrines.

The End and Result of the Calls. The proximate end of the divine call is that "those who have been called answer by faith to God and to Christ who give the call, and that they thus become the covenanted (*foederati*) people of God through Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant."¹²³ Once a member of the covenant, it is the end of the call that they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The remote end of the divine call is "the salvation of the elect and the glory of God."¹²⁴ This is accomplished in the "union of God and man" on the basis of the work of Christ.¹²⁵

The "accidental" (*per accidens*) result of the call is the rejection of the Gospel.¹²⁶ This is one of the most controversial positions which Arminius took. Arminius calls it a dispute over the "*mode of operation, whether it be resistible or not.*"¹²⁷ It is a controversy

¹¹⁹ Frederic Platt, "Arminianism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 1:810. This is a perfect example of what Carl Bangs called the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* interpretations of Arminius, see "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 23.

¹²⁰ Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, p. 54.

¹²¹ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 343: "grace is not a force; it is a Person, the Holy Spirit."

¹²² Stuart, "Creed of Arminius," p. 281.

¹²³ Arminius, "Public Disputation," XVI.ix, in *Writings*, 1:572.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, XVI.x, in *Writings*, 1:572.

¹²⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLII.ix, in *Writings*, 2:105.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, XLII.xii, in *Writings*, 2:106.

¹²⁷ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IV, in *Writings*, 1:254.

over the role of man's restored freedom. As a result of God's gracious action, Arminius maintains that one is able to cooperate or to reject any further operation of the Spirit. Since this raises the question of synergism, it will be deferred to the appropriate point below. Yet, Arminius argues that those who resist the operation of the Spirit do so on the basis of their own "malice and hardness" of heart which is properly the "cause" of their rejection of the call. As a result of this rejection, God often avenges the "contempt shewn to his word and call, and the injury done to his Holy Spirit," by removing his grace which enabled them to accept the call if they cooperated. He blinds their minds again and hardens their hearts even further, and he gives them "over to a reprobate mind" and delivers them into "the power of Satan."¹²⁸ Thus, those to whom God gives the grace to believe and they reject that grace, God often withdraws what he had previously given so as to leave them once again in the state of nature.

The Efficacy of Grace

Arminius thinks of grace as specifically saving grace. It is God's "*gratuitous affection*" towards the sinner.¹²⁹ He argues that any good which man does must be ascribed to this particular grace of God. He summarizes his doctrine of grace in this statement before The Hague in 1608:¹³⁰

In this manner, I ascribe to grace THE COMMENCE- MENT, THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL good, and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, *without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace*. From this statement it will clearly appear, that I by no means do injustice to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man's free will.

In his dispute with Perkins, Arminius acknowledged that grace has a five-fold nature. There is prevenient, preparative, operative, cooperative, and persevering grace.¹³¹ This roughly parallels the statement in his "Declaration of Sentiments" that God works through preventing, exciting, following and cooperative grace.

Sufficient and Efficacious Grace. Each of the works of grace are both sufficient and efficacious, but in different senses. All grace is sufficient, but not all grace is efficacious. At each point that the Spirit works within man, the Spirit gives sufficient grace to accomplish the "direction intended by that grace."¹³² Efficacious grace is that which actually accomplishes the intended goal of the grace. Thus, the distinction between efficacious and sufficient grace is that the latter grants the ability, but the former "really produces the effect." Arminius illustrates the distinction in his argument with Perkins:¹³³

You say that no grace is sufficient for conversion, which is not efficacious. I deny it, and nature itself exclaims against your assertion, while she

¹²⁸ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XVI.xiv, in *Writings*, 1:574.

¹²⁹ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IV, in *Writings*, 1:253.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:512.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 3:511.

distinguishes sufficiency from efficacy. God is sufficient for the creation of many worlds, yet He does not efficaciously perform it. Christ is sufficient for the salvation of all men, yet he does not efficaciously accomplish it. But you perhaps understand by *efficacious* that which can effect any thing, and so make it identical with *efficient cause*. But they who distinguish between *sufficient* and *efficacious* define the latter as that which really produces the effect.

Arminius argues, then, that Perkins confuses ability with act. Grace is sufficient in the sense that it grants ability, but it is only efficacious when the ability produces the act for which it is sufficient.¹³⁴

Sufficient grace, then, renders a man able to respond to the intent or goal of that grace which God bestows upon him. Sufficient grace is enabling grace. It is important to understand the nature of this enabling grace. Arminius maintains that "free will" is one of the natural, concreated gifts God has give to man. Fallen man still retains a natural flexibility.¹³⁵ However, this natural flexibility simply pertains to the absence of any internal or external necessity imposed upon the will. The "*freedom from necessity*," that is, freedom from a causality which is compelling and absolutely determinate, "always pertains to him because it exists naturally in the will, as its proper attribute, so that there cannot be any will if it be not free."¹³⁶ Man is constitutionally free in both nature and grace. Yet, the will, which is free from necessity, is bound over to sin in the fallen state. Since he is destitute of the Holy Spirit and is consequently directed toward the flesh, his freedom is without the will to do any true good. The reason is not that his natural ability has been destroyed (that is, no absolute necessity has been laid upon his natural will), but that he has no supernatural aid to move his will toward the good. Therefore, according to Arminius, man has a natural flexibility, but the will cannot actually move itself toward what is truly good in the fallen state.

This is exactly Arminius' point when he argues against Perkins that the "ability to will to believe" is something "all men" possess, but only the regenerate, who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, actually exercise the will to believe. The ability is possessed by all men by virtue of natural flexibility, but it is not exercised by all since all are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷ In this connection, Arminius quotes Augustine approvingly: "It belongs to the nature of man to be able to have faith and love, but it pertains to the grace of believers to actually have them."¹³⁸ Thus, all men have the capacity to will to believe, but no unregenerate man has the will to believe. Only the regenerate man, who has felt the movements of the Spirit, actually does will to believe.

Sufficient grace gives sufficient strength to the will for movement toward the good. This is the enabling power of sufficient grace. It is in this sense alone that sufficient

¹³⁴ Ibid., 3:522: "You erroneously confound *act* with *ability* and *efficacy* with *sufficiency*."

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3:510: "It is flexible by its own nature: and as it is addicted to evil in its sinful state, so it is capable of good, which capability grace does not bestow upon it; for it is in it by nature. But it is, in fact, only turned to good by grace, which is like a mould, forming the ability and capacity of the material into an act, though it may be, of itself, sufficiently evil."

¹³⁶ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XI.ii, in *Writings*, 1:524.

¹³⁷ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:485.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 3:510. He cites Augustine, *De Predestine Sanctorum*, V.

grace restores man's freedom. Arminius summarizes his position in argument with Perkins.¹³⁹

You do not prove that which you intend, when you say that "man has not free-will in spiritual things." Granted. But if grace may restore the freedom of the will, is it not then in the exercise of free-will, that he either can do sufficiently, or really does efficaciously? Nor is it to the purpose to say that "we are dead" (Col. iii,3), and that "our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii, 5). This is not denied by those who speak of sufficient grace. Nor does that three-fold inability do away with *sufficient grace*. They, who make the distinction, say that sufficient grace is able to remove that three-fold inability, and to effect that a man should receive offered grace, should use it when received, and should preserve it.

Sufficient grace, then, removes man's inabilities, and provides sufficient strength for him to accomplish true spiritual good. Yet, even what he accomplishes in terms of efficacious grace, through cooperating with his own free will, is due to the grace of God and not to his own natural ability.

Operative and Cooperative Grace. It is clear from this exposition that sufficient grace is operative, but efficacious grace is cooperative. Sufficient grace works without cooperation and efficacious grace is consummated only by cooperation. Sufficient grace operates by God's sole pleasure without any respect to man, but efficacious grace cooperates with man's restored freedom. However, this is not a simple punctiliar act in the thought of Arminius. When God grants sufficient grace through his own operation, if man cooperates with that grace (which renders it efficacious), then God grants subsequent or following grace which is itself sufficient to accomplish its goal, and will accomplish it, if man cooperates with it. Thus, the movement from sufficient to efficacious, from operative to cooperative, is an ongoing process since even the regenerate man needs constant and continuous grace to progress in sanctification. It must be emphasized that at every point where free will cooperates with grace, it does so not only on the basis of previous sufficient grace, but also by the actual presence of that grace with which it cooperates. It is, after all, co-operating grace. He works with the grace that is present within him, and at the same time it is rendered efficacious, further grace is given for subsequent sanctification. Yet, at any point, since efficacious grace involves the consent of free will, man may reject the grace given him.¹⁴⁰

In the process of operative grace the will of man is passive. Operative grace does not require participation from man's will. This is best illustrated by the example of prevenient grace. This grace is the beginning of God's work in man. When God grants sufficient grace through his prevenient or preceding work, man's will is not active in its reception. In his "Certain Articles," Arminius sets forth this proposition:¹⁴¹

In the very commencement of his conversion, man conducts himself in a purely passive manner; that is, though, by a vital act, that is, by feeling

¹³⁹ Ibid., 3:511-512.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:509: "Hence it is necessary that the free will should concur with the grace, which is bestowed, to its preservation, yet assisted by subsequent grace, and it always remains in the power of the free-will to reject the grace bestowed, and to refuse subsequent grace; because grace is not omnipotent action of God, which can not be resisted by the free-will of man."

¹⁴¹ Arminius, "Certain Articles," XVII.17, in *Writings*, 2:498, 498.

(*sensu*), he has a perception of the grace which calls him, yet he can do no other than receive and feel it. But when he feels grace affecting or inclining his mind and heart, he feely assents to it, so that he is able at the same time to withhold his assent.

This clearly sets forth the passivity of man in prevenient (sufficient, primary, operating) grace, and the cooperation required in subsequent (efficacious, secondary, cooperating) grace. Arminius illustrates it as the difference between knocking or opening the door, and actually entering into the house.¹⁴²

Arminius distinguishes several stages in this gracious activity. When Arminius was accused of teaching that the "works of the unregenerate can be pleasing to God" and that they are the "impulsive cause by which God will be moved to communicate them his saving grace," he responds by detailing his concept of regeneration.¹⁴³ He argues that the term "unregenerate" can be taken in two senses. One sense refers to "those who have felt no motion (*actum*) of the regenerating Spirit, or of its tendency or preparation for regeneration, and who are therefore, destitute of the first principle of regeneration." The other sense refers to those in the "process of the new birth, and who feel those motions (*actus*) of the Holy Spirit which belong either to preparation or to the very essence of regeneration, but who are not yet regenerate."¹⁴⁴ The former are entirely destitute of the Spirit, and the latter have sensed the first movements of the Spirit (i.e., prevenient grace), but they do not have the Spirit dwelling within them. Arminius compares this latter group to Calvin's "initial fear" and to Beza's opinion that sorrow for sin does not belong the "essential parts of regeneration."¹⁴⁵ The works of this unregenerate man may be pleasing to God in the sense that he would be moved to bestow further grace upon him according to his mercy and liberality, but they would not be pleasing to him in any kind of meritorious sense. Further, this stage is dependent upon prevenient grace for no man can be contrite concerning his sin except he be moved by the Spirit of God. Stuart properly summarizes the major point at issue:¹⁴⁶

But we need not, on this account, accuse either of them [Arminius and Beza] as being heterodox on this point, so long as they ascribe *both the initial and final process to divine grace*, and maintain that the sinner of himself is "dead in trespasses and sins."

The Recipient of Grace. But to whom does God give sufficient grace? Does God give it to everyone by virtue of common or universal grace? Arminius clearly distinguishes between common and particular grace; between universal and saving grace. Arminius finds it impossible that anyone could seriously maintain that one might receive saving grace because of his use of common grace. In argument with Perkins, he writes:¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Arminius, "Apology," XVI, in *Writings*, 1:326.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1:325.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:325.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:326. See also "Nine Questions," IV, in *Writings*, 1:382. Stuart, "Creed of Arminius," pp. 281-289 gives a detailed discussion of this distinction in Arminius and compares it with the view of John Owen. His conclusion is if "Arminius was an Arminian in regard to this whole matter, Beza was one equally decided, and Dr. Owen was greatly advanced beyond either, in the same heresy" (p. 289).

¹⁴⁶ Stuart, "Creed of Arminius," p. 284.

¹⁴⁷ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:510.

But who has ever said that "a man can apply himself to particular grace by the force of universal grace"? I think that no one can be so foolish: for the man is led to the use of particular grace, offered to him, by the free-will, assisted by particular grace. Common grace, then, is not the basis of particular grace.

Rather, only particular grace can move man to cooperate in the receiving of particular grace.

Yet, does God give this sufficient, particular grace to all men without distinction? Many expositors of Arminius have maintained that he believed God gives sufficient grace to all men indiscriminately. Wiley, for instance, argues that "Arminius regarded the ability bestowed upon our depraved nature which enabled it to co-operate with God, as flowing from the justice of God, without which man could not be held accountable for his sins."¹⁴⁸ However, Arminius makes no such statement in his writings. In fact, he presumes that all those who die outside of the reach of the external Word are condemned unless God saves them through an extraordinary work of the Spirit.¹⁴⁹ What Arminius does affirm is that God cannot condemn a man for his lack of faith if he was unable to come to faith.¹⁵⁰ This does not imply that sufficient grace is given to all men. Rather, it implies that God cannot justly condemn an unbeliever for his lack of faith who has no grace to enable him to believe. But this condemnation is not the only condemnation under which man finds himself. All men are condemned by Adam's sin. The specific condemnation of a lack of faith comes upon only those who reject God's sufficient grace. Those who never receive sufficient grace are still condemned, not because they lack faith, but because they are condemned by participation in original guilt. Further, infants may have rejected the Gospel in their parents or grand-parents. Arminius, again in argument with Perkins, comments on this consideration and also again stresses the guilt of infants:¹⁵¹

I affirm that they rejected the grace of the gospel in their parents, grand-parents, great-grand-parents, &c., by which act they deserved to be abandoned by God. I should desire that some solid reason might be presented to me why, since all his posterity have sinned, in Adam, against the law, and, on that account, have merited punishment and rejection, infants also, to whom, in their parents, the grace of the gospel is offered, and by whom, in their parents, it is rejected, have not sinned against the grace of the gospel. For the rule of the divine covenant is perpetual, that children are comprehended and judged in their parents.

Thus, there is no obligation in God to grant sufficient grace to all men individually since God has offered it to their parents, grand-parents, etc. The argument, of course, ultimately reaches back to Adam. God, therefore, is under no obligation to offer any man sufficient grace. While God may not condemn a man for a lack of faith if he never had that ability, he may condemn him in view of Adam or his covenantal relation to his parents.

¹⁴⁸ Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:108. See also Meeuwsen, "Original Arminianism," pp. 29-31.

¹⁴⁹ Arminius, "Apology," XV, XVIII in *Writings*, 1:322-324, 329-332.

¹⁵⁰ Arminius, "Nine Questions," V, in *Writings*, 1:383.

¹⁵¹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:368

But does God give sufficient grace to all who hear the Gospel? It is clear that Arminius held that the assistance of the Spirit is always attached to the Word.¹⁵² In order to answer our question, the nature of this perpetual assistance joined to the Word must be understood. Some of Arminius' critics understood him to teach that all who hear the Gospel receive sufficient grace to believe it. In fact, the following proposition was attributed to him:¹⁵³

Sufficient grace of the Holy Spirit is bestowed on those to whom the gospel is preached, whosoever they may be; so that, if they will, they may believe; otherwise, God would only be mocking mankind.

Arminius rejected the proposition in its present form, and offered some modifications. If by sufficient grace one means "some kind of *habitual grace*" which is "infused into all those to whom the Gospel is preached, which would render them apt or *inclined* to give it credence, or believe the gospel," Arminius could not accept it. If, however, one means the "*assistance of the Spirit*, by which he assists the preaching of the Gospel, as the organ or instrument, by which He, the Holy Spirit, is accustomed to be efficacious in the hearts of the hearers," he is willing to ascribed a sufficiency to the preaching of the Word.¹⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit always accompanies the Word externally, but he does not always internally present the Word to the heart of man. The upshot, then, is that while the external Word is always attended or assisted by the Spirit, he does not always effect a favorable disposition toward the Word in the heart of man. The Spirit may work internally or externally with the Word. He is not bound to do either, but he does always accompany the external Word. If we understand "sufficient grace" as that which enables a man to will to believe, then Arminius believes that God does not always grant sufficient grace through the external Word. The external Word alone amounts to common grace, but that is insufficient for saving grace. Only special grace may enable a man to believe. When, then, does God grant sufficient grace? He apparently grants it to only those whom he fore knows will use it to receive further grace.¹⁵⁵

Monergism or Synergism?

Bangs has argued that Arminius is a monergist rather than a synergist.¹⁵⁶ However, it was the thesis of Robert Dell that Arminius was a synergist as opposed to the monergism of Luther.¹⁵⁷ The problem is one of definition. If one defines synergism as a co-earning, then Arminius would reject this appellation. If, however, it simply refers to an act of reception, approval or concurrence, then Arminius would accept the label.

¹⁵² Ibid., 3:335: Commenting on Isaiah 55:11, he states that Word "is in vain without the co-operation of the Holy Spirit; and it has, always joined with it, the co-operation of the Holy Spirit."

¹⁵³ Arminius, "Apology," VIII, in *Writings*, 1:299.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:300.

¹⁵⁵ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:310-324.

¹⁵⁶ Bangs, "Arminius and Reformed Theology," p. 166: "Arminius is a monergist. Certainly there is nothing here which is akin to the synergism of Melancthon." He reaffirmed this in *Arminius*, pp. 342-344.

¹⁵⁷ Dell, "Man's Freedom and Bondage," pp. 158-163.

Consequently, it depends upon what one means by the label whether it may be applicable to Arminius. In actuality, Arminius disavowed all labels of this kind.¹⁵⁸

In one sense, Arminius' theology of grace is monergistic. At every point it affirms that the internal work of grace is the foundation and support for faith. At no point does it affirm that man believes or does anything truly good without the internal assistance of special grace. Free will is not a concurrent *cause* of grace or salvation; it is simply the receptacle which receives the flow of grace. Arminius constantly emphasizes this point as in this passage commenting upon the expression "By this sufficient grace they may believe, if they will":¹⁵⁹

These words, when delivered in such a crude and undigested form, are capable of being brought to bear a very bad interpretation, and a meaning not at all agreeable to the scriptures, as though, after that power had been bestowed, the Holy Spirit and Divine Grace remain entirely quiescent, waiting to see whether the man will properly use the power which he has received, and will believe the gospel. When, on the contrary, he who wishes to entertain and to utter correct sentiments on this subject, will account it necessary to ascribe to Grace its own province, which, indeed, is the principle one, in persuading the human will that it may be inclined to yield assent to those truths which are preached.

Consequently, there can be no merit associated with faith, nor any act of faith based upon the good in the nature of man. This distinguishes Arminius from some kind of Melancthonian synergism, and from the late Medieval synergism of Occam and Biel.¹⁶⁰

In another sense, Arminius' theology is synergistic. He does affirm that an act of approval or concurrence with grace is necessary. It is free will which approves or concurs with the movement of special grace. If there is no agreement, then special grace is not efficacious. It must be emphasized that this freedom is a freedom graciously restored by sufficient and operative grace. Yet, nevertheless, this freedom gives man the flexibility to be cooperative or to resist the continuing flow of grace.¹⁶¹ Grace does not overrule free will but cooperates with it. Arminius thinks that his contemporaries had lost this emphasis. He maintains that:¹⁶²

the nature of grace itself, and its agreement with the free-will of man, then its efficacy, and the cause of that efficacy, ought to have been more fully explained. For I consider nothing more necessary to the full investigation

¹⁵⁸ Arminius, "Apology," XXX, in *Writings*, 1:372 concerning the labels Pelagian, Semi-Pelagian and Manicheism, he says: "It would be better then to omit these epithets, and to confer solely about the matter itself."

¹⁵⁹ Arminius, "Apology," VIII, in *Writings*, 1:300-301.

¹⁶⁰ Ekkehard Muehlenberg, "Synergia and Justification by Faith," in *Discord, Dialogue, and Concord*, ed. By Lewis W. Spitz and Wenzel Lohff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 15-37; Stephen Ozment, *Age of Reform, 1250-1550* (New York: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 33-42; and Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 120-184.

¹⁶¹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:510: "Their meaning is not that grace is bestowed on all men, by which their free will may be actually inclined to do good; but that in all there exists a will which may be flexible in every direction by the aid of grace."

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 3:487.

of this subject. Augustine, because he saw this, treats, in very many places, of the agreement of grace and of free-will, and of the distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace. I remark here, in a word, that by efficacious grace is meant, not that grace is necessarily received and can not be rejected, which certainly is received, and not rejected, by all, to whom it is applied. I add that it is not to the disparagement of grace, that the wickedness and perversity of most men is so great that they do not suffer themselves to be converted by it unto God. The author of grace determined not to compel men, by his grace, to yield assent, but to influence them by a mild and gentle suasion, which influence, not only, does not take away the free consent of the free-will, but even establishes it.

Man's ability to resist depends not upon the gracious action of God, but upon his nature. His will is flexible, and in the fallen state, it is inclined toward evil. The will can resist because of its natural condition. Yet, it can also cooperate if God has restored the ability to will good.

Kendall is correct in seeing some kind of voluntarism in Arminius, but it is not an autonomous voluntarism.¹⁶³ It is its lack of autonomy or independence of God's grace that gives Arminius' theology the ring of monergism. It is clear from the above discussion that Arminius would have sided with Luther in his debate with Erasmus, but it is equally clear that he did not agree with his contemporaries that grace was irresistible. Arminius is a monergist in that it is all of grace, but he is a synergist in that man must consent. The issue hinges on the definition one gives to the various labels employed. Nevertheless, Arminius seriously attempted to give grace all the credit without forcing it upon the human subject. Bangs correctly summarizes Arminius' point in this paragraph:¹⁶⁴

Who, then, can believe? It is too simple to say for Arminius that everyone can believe. Only he who does believe can believe. One is reminded of Karl Barth's statement: "The possibility of faith becomes manifest in its actuality." [Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation*, p. 109.] The possibility and the act cannot be separated. Whatever is said about the possibility, however, it is a possibility of grace. Then, in the act of believing, man's will is liberated, and his liberated will concurs in its gracious liberation.

This is a monergism harmoniously at work with a redefined synergism. Monergism is the ground and basis while synergism is the act of concurrence or acceptance. As an act of acceptance it does not usurp the merit which grace bestows. Acceptance or concurrence does not function as the basis of salvation, but simply as a necessary mode of receiving it. Man's natural freedom, which cannot be violated, always bestows the ability to resist. But when grace is experienced and received, at every point it is grounded in and moved by God's gracious work in regeneration.

Conclusion

¹⁶³ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 147.

¹⁶⁴ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 343.

Two important points have been established. First, Arminius affirms that fallen man is held in bondage to sin so that his natural freedom is unable to will anything good. Man, of himself, cannot come to faith. In the natural state, his freedom to will the good is destroyed. This is the direct result of Adam's fall. Man is born guilty and lacking original righteousness. He is destitute of the Spirit. Second, if man is to come to faith, it is necessary that God grant him sufficient grace. This grace reaches to the inner being of man to enlighten the understanding and move the will. It is an infusion of the Holy Spirit who restores man's freedom to believe and persuades his will to concur in faith. Arminius, then, firmly believes in the necessity of grace and that the nature of this grace is internal and immediate. The point at which he disagrees with his contemporaries concerns the mode by which grace operates. Arminius maintains that cooperation is necessary and this entails the proposition that grace is resistible.

CHAPTER III

The Ground and Appropriation of Grace in Jacobus Arminius

In the midst of constant accusations, Arminius strongly affirmed his orthodoxy on the doctrine of justification. He maintained that he had never taught nor entertained "any other sentiments concerning the justification of man before God than those which are held unanimously by the Reformed and Protestant churches," and he finds himself in "complete agreement" with them.¹⁶⁵ His agreement is so thorough that he is willing to ascribe to all that Calvin said on the subject. He writes:¹⁶⁶

yet my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time and to give them my full approval.

Nevertheless, Arminius was often accused of heterodoxy on this point, and such accusations continue. For example, Praamsma argues that Arminius taught that "man is justified before God not on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ but by the human act of believing which constituted his righteousness before God." Praamsma adds that this contradicts the answer to question sixty-one of the Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁶⁷ But when Arminius was questioned about his doctrine of justification at The Hague in 1608, he replied by quoting the answers to questions sixty and sixty-one of the Heidelberg Catechism as his own opinion.¹⁶⁸ By detailing the nature and ground of justification in Arminius, the groundwork will be laid for deciding who was right, Arminius or his critics.

The Ground of Grace

The Atonement of Christ

The fundamental thesis of Arminius' doctrine of atonement is that Christ bore "the character of all men" as sinners on the cross, and that was a sufficient ransom for all men, and efficacious for believers only.¹⁶⁹ At the heart of this atonement theology is the satisfaction which God willed to make concerning sin in Christ. The necessity of this satisfaction is rooted in the nature of God's justice. He argues that Christ's mediation is such as the "justice of God required" since "it could enter upon no way of reconciliation with a world, guilty of sin, unless the Mediator should pledge satisfaction, and, in fact, should make it in accordance with the right of surety."¹⁷⁰

Necessity of Satisfaction. In his reply to Perkins, Arminius touches upon his doctrine of atonement in several places. One of the most interesting passages concerns

¹⁶⁵ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:262

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:264.

¹⁶⁷ Louis Praamsma, "Background," p. 30. Contrast Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, p. 55: "The Arminian view of justification by faith is basically that held by the Reformers."

¹⁶⁸ Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 298.

¹⁶⁹ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:345, 350.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:349.

the role of the divine will and divine justice in the decision to make satisfaction for sin. Arminius complains that Perkins sets the freedom and will of God outside of the moderation of his justice. He argues:¹⁷¹

I could wish that you would not attribute any freedom to the will of God which may impinge upon his justice. For justice is prior to the will, and is its rule, and freedom is attributed to the will as its mode. That mode, then, is limited by justice. Yet it will not, therefore, be denied that God is completely free in the acts of His will. Since then He is completely free in the acts of His will, not because he wills all things, but because He wills freely whatever He wills, in what respect is it contrary to the freedom of God, if He is said not to will certain things. For He can not, in His justice, will them, and His freedom is not limited by a superior being outside of Himself, but by His own justice.

This treatment maintains an extremely important thesis: the will of God is not free to do what is contrary to divine justice. Arminius maintains that the will of God is moderated or limited by his justice. The justice of God "presides over all his {God's} acts, decrees and deeds."¹⁷² This distinguishes Arminius from both Socinian and governmental theories of atonement. The will is not supreme, but it must act in accordance with the demands of justice.

What did the justice of God demand with respect to sin? Arminius states unequivocally that "God dispenses, absolutely according to His own will, in reference to the merit of sin, whether, in His Son to take it way, or out of His Son to punish it."¹⁷³ God could leave man to suffer the merit of sin for themselves in which case God gives the punishment that man deserves or what is "due" to them.¹⁷⁴ Sin brings guilt which has "demerit or conviction to punishment, from the justice of God."¹⁷⁵ Sin, then, must be punished. It can be punished in the individual sinner or it can be punished in a substitute. It was this second alternative which mercy, in conjunction with justice, discovered.

In the death of Christ, mercy and justice function harmoniously. Divine wisdom directed the will of God to decree a means by which mercy might have an "opportunity" but at the same time maintain the "honor" of divine justice.¹⁷⁶ The justice of God may be honored in two ways: the punishment of the sinner, or the punishment of a worthy substitute for the sinner. That mercy might have an opportunity, wisdom moved the will to choose the latter arrangement. However, this arrangement does no dishonor to divine justice. Arminius makes this clear when he parallels the two methods of punishment:¹⁷⁷

The justice of God may be displayed in the exaction of punishment from the individuals who have sinned; the same justice may also be displayed in the exaction of the same punishment from him, who has according to the will of God, offered himself as the pledge and surety for those sinners.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 3:365, 366.

¹⁷² Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXI.ii, in *Writings*, 2:48.

¹⁷³ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:365.

¹⁷⁴ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XX.xi, in *Writings*, 2:47.

¹⁷⁵ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:443.

¹⁷⁶ Arminius, "Francis Junius," XX, in *Writings*, 3:214.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. He quotes John 1:29 and 2 Cor 5:12.

The importance of this statement should not escape the notice of historical theologians.¹⁷⁸ Arminius, contrary to the views of his contemporary supporters and successors, argues that Christ endured the "same punishment" that was due to personal sinners. This exaction, in fact, was not on the basis of some relaxed justice of God, but rather it was based upon "the inflexible rigor of divine justice displayed, which could not grant, even to the intercession of His Son, the pardon of sin, unless punishment had been inflicted."¹⁷⁹ Arminius confesses the faith of all the Reformed churches that "the most complete satisfaction was made to the justice of God by the sacrifice of Christ."¹⁸⁰

Thus, God, according to his justice, either "punishes the sinner or their surety."¹⁸¹ Divine mercy moved the will to choose the latter so as to permit an opportunity for particular redemption. This mode, however, satisfied the justice of God in as rigid a manner as if he had punished each sinner individually. Christ suffered both the temporal and the eternal punishments of sin for all sinners, and satisfied those penalties.¹⁸² Interestingly, Arminius' opponents did not accuse him of teaching that Christ did not bear the eternal punishment of sin. Rather, they accused him of teaching that "Christ had rendered satisfaction only for eternal punishments."¹⁸³ He denies this proposition and affirms that Christ suffered both punishments of sin.¹⁸⁴ This was necessary in order that God's justice might be honored while at the same time permitting his mercy to be manifested.

Scope of Satisfaction. Contrary to the current opinion of the Dutch churches, Arminius argued that this sacrifice was offered for all men. Christ had paid the price for all men, but it is only efficaciously applied to believers. He summarizes his position in this account:¹⁸⁵

The ransom or price of the death of Christ, is said to be universal in its sufficiency, but particular in its efficacy, i.e. sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all sins, but its efficacy pertains not to all universally, which efficacy consists in actual application by faith and the sacrament of regeneration, as Augustine and Propser, the Aquitanian, say.

Arminius carefully distinguishes between the merit of the sacrifice and the application of the merit; between sacrifice and intercession. The merit of Christ's death is sufficient for

¹⁷⁸ It appears to have been systematically ignored since most expositors of Arminius consider his theory of atonement to be governmental or at least a predecessor of it. For example, Dorner, *Protestant Theology*, 1:423, classifies Arminius' theory of atonement with that of Hugo Grotius and Limborch. However, not all historians have ignored Arminius' position here. Pratt, "Arminianism," 1:810, reminds the reader that Arminius did not support Grotius and maintained the "inflexibility of God's righteousness."

¹⁷⁹ Arminius, "Francis Junius," XX, in *Writings*, 3:214. He also states that the Son suffered "their due punishment," 3:215.

¹⁸⁰ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:348.

¹⁸¹ Arminius, "Francis Junius," XX, in *Writings*, 3:215.

¹⁸² Arminius, "Apology," IX, XII, in *Writings*, 1:301-306, 316-317.

¹⁸³ Arminius, "Apology," IX, in *Writings*, 1:301. He

¹⁸⁴ Arminius, "Apology," IX, in *Writings*, 1:305.

¹⁸⁵ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:345.

all men, but it is bestowed only upon believers. This is true because Christ only intercedes for believers. He argues:¹⁸⁶

The sacrifice is prior to the intercession. For he could not enter into the heavens that he might intercede for us in the presence of God, except by the blood of his own flesh. It is also prior, as sacrifice has reference to merit, intercession to the application of merit. For he is called Mediator by merit and the efficacy of its application. He acquired merit by sacrifice; he intercedes for its application.

Christ rendered satisfaction to the justice of God which removed any legal obstacle to the remission of sins on God's part. However, the application of the remission of sins is by faith. Faith is the means by which God applies the redemption accomplished on the cross. The death of Christ accomplished redemption, and faith applies it.¹⁸⁷ The oblation was made, then, "not for believers, but for men as sinners, yet on this condition, that He should sanctify only believers in Christ."¹⁸⁸

The Priesthood of Christ. When Arminius received his Doctor of Divinity in 1603, he delivered an oration entitled "The Priesthood of Christ."¹⁸⁹ In this address, Arminius carefully surveys the background, nature and effects of Christ's priestly work. Due to the ineffectual nature of the Levitical priesthood, God determined to enter into a "new covenant of grace." This new covenant was necessary because "Divine justice and truth could not permit" the exercise of merciful forgiveness "except through the agency of an umpire and a surety, who might undertake the part of a Mediator between the offended God and sinners." This was the sacerdotal function of Jesus Christ. However, in order to do this the Son could not merely offer an "eucharistic sacrifice" which is simply an intercessory request by a priest. Rather, it was necessary that he offer an "expiatory sacrifice" which would remove the hostility which existed between God and man. It would provide "access to the throne of God's grace."¹⁹⁰ Arminius summarized this view of Christ's priestly work in his "Public Disputations":¹⁹¹

All these blessings really flow from the sacerdotal functions of Christ; because he hath offered to God the true price of redemption for us, by which he has satisfied Divine justice, and interposed himself between us and the Father, who was justly angry on account of our sins; and he has rendered Him placable to us.

This concept of the work of Christ is neither simply moral (Socinian) nor governmental (Remonstrant), but represents the death of Christ as a penal satisfaction for man's sin. Unlike the moral theory, Arminius maintains that God is actually reconciled to man by the death of Christ and not simply that man is reconciled to God. Christ, as victim, placated God's wrath toward man. Unlike the governmental theory, Arminius maintains that Christ actually paid the just penalty of sin due to man. The "inflexibility" of justice was declared in the death of Christ.¹⁹² Consequently, Arminius' view of

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 3:347.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 3:353-358.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 3:358.

¹⁸⁹ Arminius, "Priesthood," in *Writings*, 1:2-51.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 1:25.

¹⁹¹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIV.xv, in *Writings*, 1:559.

¹⁹² Arminius, "Priesthood," in *Writings*, 1:29.

atonement is a penal one in which Christ acted as a substitute for man in suffering the death man deserved.

Although this idea is not prominent in Arminius, and perhaps it should not be expected since it was not one of the controversies in which he was embroiled, it does surface in appropriate places. He affirms, for instance, that God's justice would not permit him to "justify, except as justification was preceded by reconciliation and satisfaction made through Christ in his blood."¹⁹³ In Christ's death there was a real and true satisfaction made for sin on man's behalf which propitiated God. However, this is not a crass paganism in which man renders to God the satisfaction which he requires. Rather, it was God himself who "rendered satisfaction to his love for justice and to his hatred against sin, when he imposed on his Son the office of Mediator by the shedding of blood and by the suffering of death."¹⁹⁴ Thus, Jesus through his death "was paying the price of redemption for sins by suffering the punishment due to them."¹⁹⁵ He did this in his office of mediator because the justice of God had to be satisfied so that the mercy of God could be expressed.¹⁹⁶ Love motivated the justice of God to perform what would make the application of mercy possible.

The Nature of Justification

Definition of Justification. In his "Private Disputations," Arminius presents this definition of justification:¹⁹⁷

Justification is a just and gracious act of God as a judge, by which, from the throne of grace and mercy, he absolves from his sins, man, a sinner, but who is a believer, on account of Christ, and the obedience and righteousness of Christ, and considers him righteous, to the salvation of the justified person, and to the glory of divine righteousness and grace.

Justification, then, is an act of God which is two-fold. First, it involves the forgiveness or the non-imputation of sin. Second, it involves God's consideration of man as righteous. While Arminius does not use the term "imputation" here, the concept is certainly there. It is implied in the term "consider." Moreover, these are forensic acts of God as a judge. The ground of this forensic declaration is the righteousness and obedience of Christ. But this is applied only to the believer. This is consistent with God's two-fold decree that he would justify only on the ground of the oblation of Christ, and that he would apply that work only to those for whom Christ as priest would intercede, that is, believers.¹⁹⁸

In detailing this definition, Arminius divides justification into four causes which, in turn, he subdivides even further. The four major causes of justification are God as the efficient or primary cause; Christ as the "meritorious" cause; faith as the "instrumental" cause; and the final cause is the glory of God.¹⁹⁹ God the Father is the primary cause in the sense that God actually dispenses mercy and justice in the justification of the believer.

¹⁹³ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.iii, in *Writings*, 2:117.

¹⁹⁴ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIV.xvi, in *Writings*, 1:560.

¹⁹⁵ Arminius, "Priesthood," in *Writings*, 1:35.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:29-30.

¹⁹⁷ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.ii, in *Writings*, 2:116.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:117

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, XLVIII.iii, v, vii, ii, in *Writings*, 2:116-117; "Apology," XXVI, in *Writings*, 1:363.

It is God who, by his judicial declaration, absolves man of sin and regards him as righteous. The wisdom of God devised a way that the mercy of God might be expressed and the justice of God fully honored in the justification of man. This act of God, applied to the believer, exhibits the glory of God in its result since God has displayed both his mercy and his justice.

The obedience of Christ is the "impetratory {procuring} or meritorious cause of justification." Arminius does not deny that the "obedience of Christ is imputed to us, that is, that it is accounted or reckoned for us and for our benefit." Consequently, "God reckons the righteousness of Christ to have been performed for us and for our benefit."²⁰⁰ For Arminius, this means that:²⁰¹

the righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law.

Thus, the "material cause" of man's justification is that God "bestows Christ on us for righteousness, and imputes his righteousness and obedience to us."²⁰² At the root of this concept is Arminius' doctrine of atonement. It is, like his Reformed critics, both substitutionary and penal in its nature. The merit of Christ is imputed to the believer as the ground of justification.

The nature of justification, according to Arminius, may be threefold: (1) the infusion of "the quality of righteousness" into a person, (2) self-acquisition, or (3) the forming of a "judgment on a person and his acts."²⁰³ He rejects both the first and second alternatives. In opposition to the Catholic Bellarmine, he insists that one is not declared righteous through an "inherent" righteousness whether that be infused or self-acquired. A man who is intrinsically righteous has no need of the gracious estimation of God. Consequently, God considers him righteous not of grace, but out his "severe and rigid" divine justice.²⁰⁴ But no man can stand before God on this basis. Justification, rather, is the occasion when one is "considered and pronounced, by God as judge, righteous (justus)."²⁰⁵ But this accounting does not take place "in himself, but in Christ, of grace, according to the gospel."²⁰⁶ Thus, justification is not the infusion of righteousness into a sinner, but is the forming of a divine judgment. Consequently, justification, for Arminius, is:²⁰⁷

purely the imputation of righteousness through mercy from the throne of grace in Christ the propitiation made (*factam*) to a sinner but who is a believer.

Justification, then, consists in the imputation, not the infusion or the self-acquisition, of righteousness. The righteousness which is imputed is the merit of Christ. It alone is the meritorious cause of justification.

²⁰⁰ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, 2:474.

²⁰¹ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:264.

²⁰² Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.v, in *Writings*, 2:117.

²⁰³ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIX.i, in *Writings*, 1:595.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, XIX.x, in *Writings*, 1:600.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, XIX.iv, in *Writings*, 1:596.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, XIX.vii, in *Writings*, 1:599.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, XIX.ix, in *Writings*, 1:599.

Faith and Imputed Righteousness. While this merit was earned for all men in terms of its sufficiency, it is particularly applied only through the "instrumental cause" of justification--faith. Only believers receive the merit of Christ. Faith is the condition of justification, and the means by which redemption is applied through the intercession of Christ.

This emphasis on faith raised doubts in the minds of Arminius' critics. They questioned whether his use of the term "imputation" was orthodox. His critics accused him of ambiguity. Several expositors of Arminius continue the charge. The most recent example is an article by Meeuwsen. He maintains that Arminius only gave "lip service" to the imputed righteousness of Christ, and argues that Arminius' view involved the lowering of the demands of the law. Consequently, Meeuwsen believes that Arminius undermined the objective basis of imputation.²⁰⁸ In defense of his analysis, he quotes the following statement by Arminius where Arminius distinguishes between two uses of the term "imputation." He states that the righteousness justified persons possess:²⁰⁹

may in an accommodated sense be denominated "imputed," (*imputativam*) as either being that which is righteous-ness in God's gracious account, since it does not merit this name according to the rigor of justice or of the law, or as being the righteousness of another, that is, of Christ, which is made ours by God's gracious imputation.

In order to understand this either/or situation it is important to note its context. In this public disputation, Arminius is arguing his case against the Catholic Bellarmine. His point is simply that the "formal righteousness" of our justification is not inherent, but imputed. To put it simply, he is disclaiming any Catholic overtones to his doctrine of justification. There is no concept of human merit in his affirmation that God considers man righteous by imputation. Man is not justified by his own inherent fulfillment of the law according to God's rigorous justice, but is justified by a righteousness which is due to God's gracious estimation. Arminius does not advocate either one of the two senses of imputation in the context, but simply sets both over against the Catholic idea of inherent righteousness. It is contextually unsound to use this statement by Arminius as evidence that he did not believe that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer.²¹⁰ The context is contrasting "imputed" with "inherent." It is not a discussion of the nature of the imputation itself.

Arminius himself addresses the charge directly in his "Apology." There he answers the charge that he taught:²¹¹

the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us for righteousness; but to believe (or the act of believing) justifies us.

²⁰⁸ Meeuwsen, "Original Arminianism," pp. 31, 32.

²⁰⁹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIX.x, in *Writings* 1:600.

²¹⁰ Even Arminius' contemporary opponents seized on this statement by him. In his "Apology," XXIV, in *Writings*, 1:356 he refers to their abuse of it, and responds: "But lest any one should seize on these expressions as an occasion for calumny, I say, that I acknowledge, 'the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us;' because I think the same thing is contained in the following words of the Apostle...(2 Cor. v, 21.)"

²¹¹ Arminius, "Apology," XXIV, in *Writings*, 1:355.

Arminius distinguished three separate propositions in this charge. The first is that "the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us."²¹² Arminius affirms the truthfulness of this proposition since "imputation" is a "gracious estimation" by which Christ "is made ours."²¹³ Arminius, then, accepts the concept of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and affirms it on numerous occasions.

The second proposition is that the "righteousness of Christ is imputed to us for righteousness."²¹⁴ Arminius denies this affirmation because:²¹⁵

whatever is imputed *for* righteousness or to righteousness, or *instead of* righteousness, it is not righteousness itself strictly and rigidly taken. But the righteousness of Christ, which he hath performed in obeying the Father is righteousness itself strictly and rigidly taken. Therefore, it is not imputed for righteousness.

Arminius does not intend to deny that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer but wants to deny that Christ's righteousness is not, in itself, righteousness. Consequently, he denies that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us for righteousness since he understands that proposition to imply that Christ's righteousness is not righteousness in itself. The point is that Christ's righteousness is not graciously accounted as such, but is rigorously and justly accounted as righteousness. Christ's righteousness is, of itself, meritorious.

The third proposition is based upon Romans 4:5. It states that "the act of believing is imputed for righteousness."²¹⁶ Arminius affirms this statement since, as he says, the Apostle made it. He argues that it is not the phrase that is inaccurate but the "signification" or sense which one gives to it that is possibly erroneous. His critics accused him of teaching that "*the righteousness of Christ* is not imputed to us or does not justify us, but *faith*, or the act of believing, does."²¹⁷ In this form, Arminius denies the accusation.

The debate concerns the proper interpretation of Romans 4:5. Arminius argues that the passage may be understood in three ways:²¹⁸

A question has been raised from these words of the Apostle Paul: "Faith is imputed for righteousness." (Rom. iv.) The enquiry was, (1) Whether those expressions ought to be *properly* understood, "so that faith itself as an act performed according to the command of the gospel, is imputed before God *for* or *unto* righteousness--and that of grace; since it is not the righteousness of the law." (2) Whether they ought to be *figuratively* and *improperly* understood, "that the righteousness of Christ, being apprehended by faith, is imputed to us for righteousness." Or (3) Whether it is to be understood "that the righteousness, for which, or unto which, faith is imputed, is the instrumental operation of faith;" which is asserted by some persons.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 1:356.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 1:355.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 1:358.

²¹⁸ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:263.

Arminius accepts the first interpretation, but not in a "rigid manner."²¹⁹ Though the sentiments of the three are equally true, the proper meaning of the text is the first. Arminius does not place these phrases in "opposition," but holds them together in unity.²²⁰ Therefore, the "form" of justification, according to Arminius, is:²²¹

the gracious reckoning (*aestimatio*) of God by which he imputes to us the righteousness of Christ and imputes faith to us for righteousness; that is, he remits our sins to us who are believers, on account of Christ apprehended by faith, and accounts us righteous in him.

It is not, then, the "act of believing" which justifies as a righteousness within itself, but it is faith, as the instrumental cause, which apprehends or grasps the righteousness of Christ. Consequently, it is true that righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and that faith is imputed for righteousness.

While Arminius holds that (1) is the correct interpretation of Romans 4:5, this does not mean that he denies that (2) and (3) are also true. It is not that there is a righteousness inherent within faith, but that faith is the condition upon which God bestows the merit Christ's obedience. Paul's expression, at this particular point, is not referring to the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but to the condition upon which that righteousness is applied. It is in that sense that "faith is imputed for righteousness." In his discussion with Perkins, Arminius clearly elucidates his meaning:²²²

The righteousness, rendered by Christ, is not ours in that it is rendered, but in that it is imputed unto us by faith, so that faith itself may be said to be "counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv, 5.)

Thus, faith itself is not the righteousness since it is the merit of Christ which is applied by faith, that is, one becomes righteous by faith in the sense that the righteousness of Christ is applied to the one who believes. There is no merit in the act of faith itself.

The Ground of Justification. Immediately after discussing this three-fold interpretation of Romans 4:5, Arminius clearly defines the ground and nature of justification in his thought. He gives this confession before The Hague:²²³

I believe that sinners are accounted righteous solely by the obedience of Christ; and that the righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But since God imputes the righteousness of Christ to none except believers, I conclude that, in this sense, it may be well and properly said, *To a man who believes, Faith is imputed for righteousness through grace*, because God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation, a throne of grace, {or mercy seat} through faith in his blood.

This statement explicitly affirms that the objective righteousness of Christ (his obedience) is imputed to believers. Since it is only applied to believers, it may be said that God imputes righteousness to faith. Yet, this very statement, according to Arminius, implies that there is no righteousness within faith itself. Imputation is by grace alone, and

²¹⁹ Ibid., 1:263.

²²⁰ Arminius, "Apology," XXIV, in *Writings*, 1:358.

²²¹ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.viii, in *Writings*, 2:118.

²²² Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:354.

²²³ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:264.

not out of debt. Consequently, faith is opposed to merit. Christ accomplishes the merit, but it is applied by faith. The merit belongs only to Christ, but it is given to those who believe in him. Arminius argues that if he had said that "*the righteousness of Christ* is not imputed to us or does not justify us, but *faith*, or the act of believing, does," then he would have been incorrect. On the contrary, Arminius does not place them in opposition, but affirms both to be true: one as the ground, the other as the condition (means).²²⁴ Arminius' understanding is that the former contains all the merit and the latter is the instrument.

This distinction is explicitly present in Arminius' "Private Disputations." He distinguishes between the "meritorious" and the "material" cause of justification. The meritorious cause is that "outwardly moving cause" which provided the ground upon which God is reconciled to man. It earned the merit which made the application of the remission of sins possible. The "material cause" is the actual bestowal of "Christ on us for righteousness, and imputes his righteousness and obedience to us."²²⁵ Christ's work of obedience moved God to justify man, and the actual justification of man is moved by the bestowal of Christ's righteousness. God wills antecedently to justify all men based upon Christ's objective work--Christ actually earned merit for man. However, God only justifies those who are materially endowed with Christ's righteousness. This gift is applied or bestowed by faith. This is because God's consequent will was to apply that righteousness which justifies to believers only. Thus, "faith is the instrument of that application."²²⁶ Arminius refers to it as the "instrumental cause, or act, by which we apprehend Christ proposed to us by God for a propitiation and for righteousness."²²⁷ Thus, Arminius holds that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers and faith is imputed as righteousness. But this simply means that God "remits sins to us who are believers, on account of Christ apprehended by faith, and accounts (*censet*) us righteous in him."²²⁸ Faith, therefore, does not contain the merit, but applies the merit of Christ.²²⁹

In summary, Arminius believes that the righteousness of Christ is accounted ours when we are united with him. The means of this union is faith. Upon the act of believing our faith is accounted for righteousness (which it is not in itself) because of its relation to Christ. Through this faith, we are united with Christ and his righteousness becomes ours. Faith has this function only because it has "Christ and his righteousness for its object and foundation."²³⁰ That righteousness of Christ, then, is imputed to the believer since God

²²⁴ Arminius, "Apology," XXIV, in *Writings*, 1:358. In the same place, he states: "When they place these phrases in opposition to each other, they do this, not from the meaning which I affix to them, but from their own; and, therefore, according to the signification which they give to them severally, they fabricate this calumny, which is an act of iniquity."

²²⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.v, *Writings*, 2:117.

²²⁶ Arminius, "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:458.

²²⁷ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.vii, in *Writings*, 2:117-118.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, XLVIII.viii, in *Writings*, 2:118.

²²⁹ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, 2:474: "But the conclusion which they draw from this affirmation, namely 'that Christ and his righteousness are excluded from our justification, and that (eam) our justification is attributed to the worthiness of our faith,' I by no means concede it to be possible for them to deduce from my sentiments."

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

"reckons" it "to have been performed for us and for our benefit."²³¹ For Arminius, the meritorious cause of justification is the righteousness of Christ, and the instrumental cause is faith alone.²³²

The Appropriation of Grace

The New Covenant

The work of Christ both removed the guilt of sin and merited righteousness for sinful man. This merit and the expiation of sin is appropriated by faith. Faith is the instrument through which grace is applied. For Arminius, faith is not a righteous act of merit, but an active reception of merit that is external to itself. It is faith alone which receives the merit of Christ's righteousness for justification. All of this takes place within the precepts and promises of the new covenant.

Arminius argues for a fundamental and radical distinction between Law and Gospel. This is seen in the way that he contrasts the Law of innocence and the Law of Moses with the Gospel. The difference between the Adamic Law and the Gospel may be summarized as a difference between a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. Arminius has no qualms about calling the agreement between God and Adam a "covenant."²³³ It was a covenant of works since it was a religion built on "rigid and strict righteousness (justitiae) and legal obedience."²³⁴ It was Law as opposed to Gospel. The fundamental difference between the Adamic Law and the Gospel was the "mode of remuneration."²³⁵ Arminius argues that the primitive covenant rewarded out of debt rather than out of grace. It was based upon strict justice according to perfect obedience in works, but the reception of the blessings of the Gospel are rooted in the work of Christ whose benefits are given to man by faith.

The only similarity between the Adamic covenant and the covenant of grace consists in the possibility of obeying the Law. It is argued that Adam, endowed with

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Arminius was often confronted with an issue raised by the French theologian John Piscator. Piscator argued that only the passive obedience of Christ was imputed to the believer. Arminius refused to get involved in the dispute. He called for liberty of opinion on the matter since Scripture simply affirmed that "Christ has been made of God to me for righteousness," ("Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, 2:473). See also "Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:262-263. However, it does appear that if Arminius were forced to a side of the issue, he would opt for the generally received position that both the active and passive righteousness of Christ are imputed to the believer. This is implied by his concept of Christ's merit. It is applied to the believer in such a way that God regards them as righteous "as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law" ("Declaration of Sentiments," IX, in *Writings*, 1:264). Thus, Christ's righteousness which was for us and our benefit, benefited us in sinless perfection before the law. This tends to view Christ as actively working righteousness for us rather than simply the benefits of his death. It is not simply that Christ paid the penalty of sin, but that he earned merit which is given to believers.

²³³ He generally refers to it as *foedus primaevum*, see Arminius, "Private Disputations," XXXII.vi, in *Writings*, 2:81.

²³⁴ Ibid., XXXII.iii, in *Writings*, 2:80.

²³⁵ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIII.v, in *Writings*, 1:541.

supernatural aid, could keep the Law he was given, and the regenerate man, also endowed with supernatural aid, can keep the covenant given to him. Arminius clearly states that the two covenants agree in the "possibility of its performance" since Adam was able and the Christian is able to keep the covenant given to them.²³⁶ Muller has seized upon this agreement as evidence that Arminius was conforming the covenant of grace to the primitive covenant. Consequently, he thinks that in the Arminian system the primitive covenant is the pattern of the Gospel rather than a pattern for the legalism of the Mosaic covenant. The only difference is the redemptive aspect of the Gospel.²³⁷ However, this ignores several factors in Arminius' discussion. It must be recognized that Adam's ability as well as the regenerate man's ability is rooted in the supernatural gifts of God. Adam was able, not by nature, but by grace to fulfill the Law given to him. Likewise, regenerate man is also able to fulfill the covenant only by grace.²³⁸ Yet, the offer of salvation is based upon a different premise altogether. The Adamic covenant is rooted in legal obedience, the new covenant is rooted in faith. The nature of the two covenants is fundamentally different. Certainly both offer salvation (eternal life), but they do so in radically different ways. The new covenant does not, as Muller argues it does, offer salvation on the same basis as the Adamic covenant except that the requirements of the new covenant are less rigorous. On the contrary, the new covenant offers salvation as a gift of grace, and not as payment of a debt. It is salvation by faith rather than works. For Arminius, the merit of the new covenant is wholly external to faith itself, but in the primitive covenant its merit was wholly internal. The "mode of remuneration" in the primitive covenant was, in fact, the same as that under the Mosaic covenant. It was a "law of innocence" rather than a Gospel of grace.²³⁹ The only similarity with the new covenant, and consequently a difference with the Mosaic covenant, was the possibility of keeping the Law based upon supernatural aid. The Adamic Law, then, was a covenant of works like the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law, however, lacked the supernatural aid of the Spirit so that it was impossible for one to be justified by the Law of works. This prepared man for the coming of the Gospel.

It is important, at this point, to understand Arminius' radical distinction between Law and Gospel. The Gospel is not a lessening of the rigor of the Law. Rather, it is an offer of Christ's righteousness, which fulfilled the rigor of the Law, on the condition of faith. This does not undermine the covenant of works, it fulfills it and imputes the merit to man by grace through faith. Faith does not function within in a covenant of works. On the contrary, it is the condition through which God gives the merit of Christ. The new covenant, then, does not substitute a rigorous application of the Law with an inferior severity. It fulfills the rigor of divine justice so that God may give the blessings of the new covenant on the condition of faith. Faith, then, is not a work, in the sense of a covenant of works, but is the act of receiving the gift which Christ has accomplished for believers.

²³⁶ Ibid., XIII.iii, in *Writings*, 1:540.

²³⁷ Richard A. Muller, "The Federal Motif in Seventeenth Century Arminian Theology," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 62.1 (1982): 107-108.

²³⁸ Arminius, "Apology," XVII, in *Writings*, 1:328: "Nay, we carry this principal so far as not to dare to attribute the power here described, even to the nature of Adam himself, without the help of Divine grace, both infused and assisting."

²³⁹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIII.iv, in *Writings*, 1:540.

Definition and Nature of Faith.

Arminius' definition of faith is similar to that of his contemporaries.²⁴⁰ He identifies knowledge as the foundation of faith, and its "antecedent." The formal act of faith is assent (*assensus*). The immediate "consequent" of faith is confidence or trust (*fiducia*).²⁴¹

Arminius argues that this faith is the direct result of the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit. The assent which constitutes the formal act of faith is "infused above the order of nature."²⁴² Its "author" is the Holy Spirit who proposes truth to the understanding and "there works a persuasion" (*persuadet*).²⁴³ This is a supernatural, internal work of the Spirit. Arminius regards the absence of an "internal grace" as the mark of Pelagianism.²⁴⁴ Further, his definition of faith does not include works. Faith is the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit. It is not constituted by works, but rather is "confirmed and increased by the daily exercises of prayers and mortification of the flesh, and by the practice of good works."²⁴⁵ Faith grows by external works, but they do not constitute faith. Thus, faith is assent to what is known by the understanding which produces trust. This assent is the work of the Spirit and exists apart from works. Works do not constitute faith.

It is in this light that Arminius insists that faith is both a gift of God and a condition of salvation which involves a human response. He offers this description of faith:²⁴⁶

Faith is the gracious and gratuitous gift of God, bestowed according to the administration of the means necessary to conduce to the end, that is, according to such an administration as the justice of God requires, either towards the side of mercy or towards that of severity. It is a gift which is not bestowed according to an absolute will of saving some particular men; for it is a condition required in the object to be saved, and it is in fact a condition before it is the means for obtaining salvation.

Faith is a gift in the sense that it is the effect of God's prevenient grace. It is a human response in the sense that it is a condition for receiving justifying grace.

As a result of this viewpoint, Arminius was asked this question: "Is justifying faith the effect and the mere (*purum*) gift of God alone, who calls, illuminates, and reforms the will?" He answered that "faith is the effect of God's illuminating the mind and sealing the heart, and it is his mere gift."²⁴⁷ His point is that no one comes to the Father except he is drawn by the prevenient grace of God. Man's will to believe, as was

²⁴⁰ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, p. 142.

²⁴¹ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLIV.ii, v, in *Writings*, 2:109-110.

²⁴² XLIV.v, in *Writings*, 2:110. See "Perkins," in *Writings*, 3:324: "By that revelation and prediction, God binds Himself to offer the Mediator to the world, whether it should believe or not; but by that offering He demands faith, and by the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit, added thereto, He effects faith and binds Himself to give salvation to the believer."

²⁴³ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLIV.vi, in *Writings*, 2:110.

²⁴⁴ Arminius, "Nine Questions," V, in *Writings*, 1:383.

²⁴⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLIV.v, in *Writings*, 2:110.

²⁴⁶ Arminius, "Certain Articles," XIX.ix, in *Writings*, 2:500.

²⁴⁷ Arminius, "Nine Questions," VI, in *Writings*, 1:384.

seen above, is the direct result of God's grace. Consequently, faith is fundamentally God's gift since no man could believe unless God had first given him the gift of grace, that is, the will to believe.²⁴⁸

However, faith is also an human act. It is an act of believing. It is an act of assent or approval. It is important to note several key distinctions in Arminius at this point. He distinguishes between the "*quality or habit*" of faith and the "*act*" of faith. Habitual faith is the capacity, the will to believe, which God infuses into a man. However, actual faith is that which God requires for the imputation of righteousness.²⁴⁹ Consequently, the habit of faith is the gift--it is operative grace, but the act of faith is the result of cooperative grace in which man submits to the movements of God's grace. In the reception of habitual faith, man is passive, but in the act of faith, he is both active and passive.

The passivity of faith is seen in two respects. First, the act of faith never arises out of the human subject alone. According to Arminius, God does not give man habitual faith and then cease his activity in some deistic sense. On the contrary, the gracious work of the Spirit is constant, and at every point he is working to bring man to faith. The flow of grace does not stop, but it continues as it brings man to the act of faith. The grace of God not only precedes, but it accompanies and follows any good that man accomplishes.²⁵⁰

Second, the passivity of faith is seen in the absence of merit. Faith is not to be considered a work, but is rather an act of reception. It is not a work of righteousness because if it were, then righteousness could not be imputed to it. "Faith is not righteousness itself, but is graciously accounted for righteousness."²⁵¹ Faith, therefore, is not the ground of justification. Arminius makes this clear.²⁵²

Christ has not obtained (*promeritum*) by his merits that we should be justified by the worthiness and merit of faith and much less that we should be justified by the merit of works: But the merit of Christ is opposed to justification by works; and in the Scriptures, faith and merit are placed in opposition to each other.

Christ's obedience is the merit of justification. Faith has no part in that merit except that it receives it. Faith and Christ's death do not stand in the same relation to salvation. The believer is saved by merit, but not a merit which derives from faith, but a merit which was earned by Christ. Consequently, salvation, according to Arminius, is not a lessening of the rigor of the Law but the fulfillment of it in Christ by the imputation of his righteousness.

However, the will of man does have an active role in coming to faith. Man must cooperate with the grace of God. This cooperation, however, is not a co-earning, but it is an active reception of a gift, that is, the gift of Christ's merit. Nevertheless, faith remains an act on the part of man (but not without the assistance of grace). Arminius writes that

²⁴⁸ Arminius, "Certain Articles," XIX.x, in *Writings*, 2:500-501: "No man believes in Christ except he has been previously disposed and prepared, by preventing or preceding grace, to receive life eternal on that condition on which God wills to bestow it."

²⁴⁹ Arminius, "Nine Questions," VIII, in *Writings*, 1:387.

²⁵⁰ Arminius, "Apology," XVII, in *Writings*, 1:328. Cf. "Apology," IV, in *Writings*, 1:288: "Among those causes, I consider the preventing, accompanying and succeeding {subsequent} grace of God, as the principal."

²⁵¹ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, 1:474.

²⁵² Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII, Corollary iii, in *Writings*, 2:119.

"faith is the requirement of God and the act of the believer when he answers the requirement."²⁵³ However, it is an act which is of the nature of "acceptance or apprehension." Ibid. It is, therefore, an act only as it is an instrument of justification, that is, the means by which Christ is made ours in cooperation with the Spirit of God. This constitutes the "agreement and concurrence" between divine grace and free will.²⁵⁴ In order to illustrate this concurrence and the nature of faith, Arminius gives the following example:²⁵⁵

A rich man bestows, on a poor and famishing beggar, alms by which he may be able to maintain himself and his family. Does it cease to be a pure gift, because the beggar extends his hand to receive it? Can it be said with propriety, that "the alms depended partly on *the liberality* of the Donor, and partly on *the liberty* of the Receiver," though the latter would not have possessed the alms unless he had received it by stretching out his hand? Can it be correctly said, *because the beggar is always prepared to receive*, that "he can have the alms, or not have it, just as he pleases?" If these assertions cannot be truly made about the beggar who receives alms, how much less can they be made about the gift of faith, for the receiving of which far more acts of Divine grace are required!

Bangs summarizes the relation between the passive and active aspects of the will in this way: "salvation being in Christ, it is not dependent upon free will, but free will is active in salvation."²⁵⁶ Free will does not act alone (autonomously) or meritoriously but it does act to receive what God offers.

It is because of this emphasis on faith as a human response that Arminius was accused of denying that faith is the instrument of justification.²⁵⁷ In response to the charge he asks: "What man is so utterly senseless as universally to deny, that Faith can be called 'an instrument,' since it receives and apprehends the promises which God has given, and does also in this way concur to justification?" The issue, according to Arminius, is "how faith is an instrument."²⁵⁸ He explains that faith is an instrument in the sense that it receives merit from outside of itself, but it is also an act of obedience in the sense that it actually apprehends Christ as an object. He explains himself in this way:²⁵⁹

The thing itself, as it is explained by our brethren, also solves the question. "Faith is imputed for righteousness on account of Christ, the object which it apprehends." Let this be granted. Yet the apprehending of Christ is nearer than the instrument which apprehends, or by which He is apprehended. But apprehending is an act; therefore, faith, not as it is *an instrument*, but as it is *an act* is imputed for righteousness, although such imputation be made on account of Him whom it apprehends. In brief, (*potentia*) the capability or the quality by which any thing is apprehended,

²⁵³ Arminius, "Apology," XXVI, in *Writings*, 1:363.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., XXVII, in *Writings*, 1:365.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 1:365-366.

²⁵⁶ Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," p. 168

²⁵⁷ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, pp. 147, 148, continues this charge in his interpretation of Arminius. He assumes that faith as an act excludes faith as an instrument.

²⁵⁸ Arminius, "Apology," XXVI, in *Writings*, 1:363.

²⁵⁹ Arminius, "Apology," XXVI, in *Writings*, 1:364.

and the apprehension itself, have each relation to the object which is to be apprehended, the former *a mediate* relation, the latter *an immediate*. The latter, therefore, is a more modest metonymy, as being derived from that which is nearer; even when it is granted that this phrase, "it is imputed for righteousness"--must be explained by a metonymy. The man, then, who says, "the act of faith is imputed for righteousness," does not deny that faith as an instrument concurs to justification.

It is faith as act, then, which functions as the instrument which receives merit from outside of itself, that is, the merit of Christ. Its quality is that of an instrument, but its nature is that of an act of obedience. The former entails the reception of merit, the latter involves man's cooperation with divine grace.

Nature of Justifying Faith

Faith and Works. The radical disjunction between Law and Gospel has implications for the nature of justifying faith. Arminius argues that the apostle Paul "takes away justification together and at once from the whole law."²⁶⁰ This means that no one is able to be justified by the works of moral or ceremonial Law. Justification according to the moral Law involves a perfect obedience in accordance with the strict and rigid justice of God. On this ground, justification is given to man by debt rather than by grace. The works of ceremonial Law are not, in themselves, meritorious. They cannot be imputed for righteousness and they cannot obtain absolution from moral sins.²⁶¹ Evangelical justification, then, does not belong to Law. It is not according to debt, but grace. There is no intrinsic merit within justifying faith. The two systems of justification cannot be reconciled together, "either by an unconfused union, or by admixture."²⁶² Therefore, faith is the means of justification by grace. It is not a legal principle of human righteousness. Arminius summarizes his position in this way:²⁶³

But justification is attributed to faith, not because it is that very righteousness which can be opposed to the rigid and severe judgment of God, though it is pleasing to God; but because, through the judgment of mercy triumphing over justice, it obtains absolution from sins, and is graciously imputed for righteousness. (Acts xiii, 39.) The cause of this is, not only God who is both just and merciful, but also Christ by his obedience, offering, and intercession according to God through his good pleasure and command.

Faith is accepted as a condition, not of earning righteousness, but of receiving righteousness. Faith does not work justifying righteousness according to a legal principle, but receives the righteousness of Christ so that it can be said that faith is imputed for righteousness. This is the difference between Law and Gospel. One works out of debt (a legal principle), but the other out of grace (on condition of faith). The former works its own righteousness, but the latter receives the righteousness of another which is wholly external to faith.

²⁶⁰ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIX.vii, in *Writings*, 1:598.

²⁶¹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIX.v, vi, in *Writings*, 1:597-598.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, XIX.viii, in *Writings*, 1:599.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, XIX.vii, in *Writings*, 1:598.

Therefore, Arminius argues that one is either justified out of debt or grace.²⁶⁴

Grace belongs to faith and debt to works. There can, therefore, be no conjunction between the two with respect to justification. He clearly asserts that "faith and works concur together to justification is a thing impossible."²⁶⁵ This includes all kinds of works: the works of both the ceremonial and moral Laws. This even includes works done by a righteous believer for he affirms that a man cannot possibly "appear by faith and works" before God.²⁶⁶ Arminius was accused of maintaining that one appears before God "not only by Faith, but also by Works." He denies the charge.²⁶⁷ He summarizes his response to the charge in this way:²⁶⁸

But perhaps you will say, that you do not appear before God "by works of the law, but by *works produced from faith and love*." I wish you to explain to me, what is it *to appear by faith*, and what *to appear by works*; and whether it can possibly happen, that *a man may appear both by faith and works*. I know, the saints who will be placed before the tribunal of the Divine Justice, have had Faith, and through Faith have performed good Works. But, I think, they appear and stand before God with this confidence or trust, "that God {*proposuit*} has set forth his Son Jesus Christ as a propitiation through Faith in his blood, that they may thus be justified by the Faith of Jesus Christ, through the remission of sins." I do not read, that Christ is constituted a propitiation *through Works in his blood*, that we may also *be justified by Works*.

Arminius, therefore, excludes all works from the realm of justifying faith. Consequently, he explicitly rejects the Catholic dogma of "formal faith."²⁶⁹ For Arminius, to be justified by works is to be justified by the Law, and to be justified by faith is to be justified by grace. Works are as much opposed to faith as Law is to grace. Thus, just as one cannot be justified by both Law and grace, neither can one be justified by both faith and works. As a result, he writes:²⁷⁰

For he who is justified by the law neither is capable nor requires to be justified by faith; (Rom. iv, 14, 15;) and it is evident that the man who is justified by faith could not have been justified by the law. (xi, 6.)

Arminius, therefore, adheres to the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. He explicitly affirms this in his "Letter to Hippolytus."²⁷¹

The last article is on justification, about which these are my sentiments: Faith, and faith only, (though there is no faith alone without works,) is imputed for righteousness. By this alone are we justified before God, absolved from our sins, and are accounted, pronounced and declared righteous by God, who delivers his judgment from the throne of grace.

²⁶⁴ Arminius, "Priesthood of Christ," in *Writings*, 1:33. See "Apology," XXV, in *Writings*, 1:361.

²⁶⁵ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII, Collary i., in *Writings*, 2:119.

²⁶⁶ Arminius, "Apology," XXV, in *Writings*, 1:362.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:359.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:362.

²⁶⁹ Arminius, "Public Disputations," XIX.xi, in *Writings*, 1:600-601.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX.viii, in *Writings*, 1:599

²⁷¹ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, 2:473.

Therefore, Arminius excludes both works and merit from his concept of faith. For him, justification is by faith alone. While it is objected that his is not the Reformation doctrine since Arminius regards the act of faith as justifying righteousness, this is a misreading of him. As Slaatte argues, Arminius rejected "Solifidianism or the idea that it is enough to believe; justification rests not on such an act but on the righteousness of Christ."²⁷²

Assurance of the Believer. Can one be assured of his justification in this life? How does one know when he is justified? Arminius clearly believes that it is possible for one to know he is justified and to be assured of his standing before God. In response to the question on assurance, Arminius replies:²⁷³

Since God promises eternal life to all who believe in Christ, it is impossible for him who believes, and who knows that he believes, to doubt of his own salvation, unless he doubts of this willingness of God to perform his promise...it is a consequence of that promise, by which God engages to bestow eternal life on him who believes.

Arminius identifies two "seals" of justification.²⁷⁴

The external seal of justification is baptism; the internal seal is the Holy Spirit, testifying together with our {corde} spirits that we are the children of God, and crying in our hearts, Abba, Father!

Baptism is a sign, confirmation or sealing of God's "communication of grace" to the baptized. It does not confer grace, but it is a sign which confirms the promises of God's grace in the new covenant.²⁷⁵ However, it is the internal witness of the Spirit which renders the believer certain of his justification. In his "Declaration of Sentiments," he maintains that this certainty "is wrought in the mind, as well by the action of the Holy Spirit inwardly actuating the believer and by the fruits of faith, as from his own conscience, and the testimony of God's Spirit witnessing together with his conscience."²⁷⁶ While Arminius appeals to the "fruits of faith," it is clear that the internal testimony of the Spirit is crucial for him.²⁷⁷ This is apparent from discussion of the "Certainty of Sacred Theology." In that address he argues that all certainty derives from the "internal witness of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit "persuades {us} by imparting Divine meanings to the word, by enlightening the mind as with a lamp, and by inspiring and sealing it by his own immediate action."²⁷⁸ The truth and certainty of doctrine may be summarized by the phrase "God in Christ," but we are convinced of this "by means of the efficacy of the

²⁷² Slaatte, *Arminian Arm*, p. 55.

²⁷³ Arminius, "Nine Questions," VII, in *Writings*, 1:384-385. Cf. "Declaration of Sentiments," VI, in *Writings*, 1:255: "With regard to the certainty {or assurance} of salvation, my opinion is, that it is possible for him who believes in Jesus Christ to be certain and persuaded, and, if *his heart condemn him not*, he is now in reality assured, *that he is a Son of God, and stands in the grace of Jesus Christ.*"

²⁷⁴ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII.xi, in *Writings*, 2:118.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, LXIII.vi, viii, in *Writings*, 2:160.

²⁷⁶ Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," VI, in *Writings*, 1:255.

²⁷⁷ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, p. 148, sees the "fruits of faith" as indicative of the practical syllogism. But this is not necessarily true since Arminius may simply mean a growth of faith rather than a ground of assurance.

²⁷⁸ Arminius, "Certainty of Sacred Theology," IX, in *Writings*, 1:143-144.

Holy Ghost" who "most clearly convinces our minds of the truth, and in a very powerful manner seals the certainty on our hearts."²⁷⁹ Assurance, then, is rooted in the certainty which the Spirit gives us concerning the promises of God. If we believe, and our heart does not condemn us, then we can be assured of our justification before God. This assurance is itself sealed by both the external sign of baptism and the internal witness of the Spirit. The fruits of life are simply external evidence or confirmation of a justifying faith. They, however, do not assure--only faith assures through the witness of the Spirit.

Conclusion

Arminius' doctrine of justification is grounded upon the complete satisfaction which Christ made to God's justice. In his death he paid the true penalty of sin due to man. He also earned merit for man's benefit. This merit is bestowed upon man in justification. It is the imputation of Christ's righteousness. This cannot be understood in any other way than an objective basis of justification which is wholly external to the justified person. This righteousness is applied by faith. Since faith is the condition of justification, when one believes, by the grace of God, his act of faith is imputed for righteousness in the sense that God bestows the merit of Christ upon the believer by grace. There is nothing meritorious within faith. It is the unworthiness of faith itself which excludes works. Man is justified by faith alone on account of the work of Christ. Therefore, Arminius' doctrine of justification must be accounted as Reformed as he always claimed it was.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:144.

Chapter IV

The Nature and Necessity of Grace in Philip van Limborch

The purpose of this chapter is to explain Limborch's understanding of the necessity of grace and to define the nature of its operation. The mode by which grace operates is grounded in the nature of the need which man has for it. In Limborch's system, grace is neither irresistible nor direct. He disavows both because man's need is adapted to a resistible and indirect mode of operation. Consequently, it is necessary to detail Limborch's understanding of the need of grace in order to understand the nature of its operation. This need will be explained in the context of the distinction between created and fallen man. By this comparison it will be possible to understand both the necessity and nature of grace in Limborch's theology.

Man as Created

All of Limborch's deliberations concerning the operation of grace are founded upon his understanding of human psychology. He does not see any fundamental difference between man as originally created and man in the unregenerate state. His essential psychology and abilities remain the same. The result is that God relates to man in the post-fall in essentially the same way that he did in the pre-fall state.

The Psychology of Man

According to Limborch, the soul has two basic faculties: the understanding (*intellectus*) and the will (*voluntas*).²⁸⁰ The relationship of these two faculties is important for an understanding of the mode of grace's operation and the origin of faith in man since this Remonstrant theologian sees faith as the result of that action of grace which convinces the understanding and moves the will. Since the will is, by definition, free, it cannot be moved irresistibly. Indeed, the movement itself is not direct since it occurs through the efficacy of the Word which convinces the understanding. The will is not moved by a direct impulse of the Spirit, but by the persuaded intellect.

While Limborch makes this distinction between the understanding and the will, it is a purely conceptual one. The soul itself is not so divided that it can act in one capacity without the other. The faculties are neither distinct from the soul nor from each other. On the contrary, Limborch argues:²⁸¹

Understanding and Will are not two faculties distinct in fact from the soul of man and from each other, but the soul of its essence immediately understands and wills.

It is because several operations of the soul are observed that a conceptual distinction is made even though the soul immediately wills and understands without "any intervening powers."²⁸² It is the nature of man that he acts of himself. His power to will and to understand originates within himself in such a way that no external power is able, without

²⁸⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, II, xxiii, 1.

²⁸¹ Limborch to Locke, October 3, 1701, in E. S. de Beer, ed., *The Correspondance of John Locke*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), no. 3010.

violation to the created psychology of man, to "intervene" in the willing and understanding of man.

The faculty of understanding is a pure (*nuda*) act of intellect which apprehends or judges whether a thing is true or false; whether it is good or evil. This action of the intellect is both natural and necessary (*naturalis ac necessarius*). Limborch views the action of the intellect as necessary in the sense that when an object is proposed to it which is "proportionate" (*proportionato*) to the intellect, the faculty of understanding necessarily "apprehends it clearly and distinctly." On the other hand, if an object is disproportionate (*non proportionato*) to the understanding, then the apprehension of it is "obscure and confused" (*obscura ac confusa*). An obscure and confused understanding can be cured by training and education.²⁸³ This necessity is derived from the use of reason. This is evident in this thesis which he proposed to John Locke.²⁸⁴

This judgment, in so far as it is purely an act of understanding (*merus intelligendi actus*), does not proceed beyond persuasion: this is eligible, or, it is proper to choose this; it is proper to reject this; or, among eligibles, this is more, this is less eligible; among things to be avoided, this ought more, this ought less, to be avoided.

A pure act of the intellect, then, is not influenced by passion or the will. If that were the case, then the judgment would not be rendered according to pure reason. Indeed, the "act of understanding, by which a man forms a judgment about his action, precedes an act of willing."²⁸⁵ Consequently, when a proposition is placed before the intellect, the judgment it renders as a pure act of understanding is necessary.

Limborch compares it with the deductions of syllogistic logic. When the understanding is presented with a conclusion which is drawn from legitimate premises, "the intellect is not able to deny the legitimate conclusion if it understands and apprehends it correctly."²⁸⁶ The action of the intellect is necessary according to the use of correct reason. It necessarily draws the correct conclusions from the premises whether they be that the object is obscure, in which case one suspends judgment, or whether they be that the proposition is true or false. The understanding must draw the corresponding conclusions.²⁸⁷ The necessity of the action of the understanding is not undermined by the fact that the understanding cannot give factual assent to every proposition. Even where one cannot assent to a proposition, one necessarily renders some opinion. Limborch explained it to John Locke in this way:²⁸⁸

²⁸² Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, II, xxiii, 2: Anima immediate per seipsam absque ullis intervenientibus potentias ab anima emanantibus, intelligit & vult. Et quia diverso modo occupatur circa unam eandemque rem, hinc etiam diversae ipsi juxta nostrum confiderandi modum attribuuntur potentiae.

²⁸³ Ibid., II, xxiii, 5.

²⁸⁴ Limborch to Locke, October 3, 1701 in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 3010.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, II, xxiii, 7: ...non potest intellectus, si illum recte intelligit & apprehendit, quin conclusionem legitimam agnoscat.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., II, xxiii, 8: Ex quibus manifesto constat, omnem intellectus actum, quatenus solius intellectus est, esse necessarium, & excludere liberatatem, non tantum contradictionis, sed & contrarietatis.

²⁸⁸ Limborch to Locke, October 3, 1701 in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 3010.

When concerned with theoretical truths the action of the understanding is absolutely necessary: when a clear and plain truth is put before it the understanding necessarily assents, or rather a man necessarily perceives it and gives assent to it; when arguments that are only probable are put forward a man necessarily forms an opinion. Thus, whether the conclusion is factual or opinionated, the judgment rendered by the faculty of understanding is necessary.

The will is an act of the soul which "is inclined to an object proposed to it under the notion of good."²⁸⁹ According to Limborch, the essential property of the will is liberty:²⁹⁰

The property of the will is liberty by which the will has dominion over its own action so that either it elicits or it does not elicit which is so essential to the will that without it, it is not the will.

His choice of the term *intima* is interesting. Liberty, as he conceives it, is intimate to the functioning of the will. It is the innermost ground of the will itself. In distinction from the intellect, willing is a free action.

The will must be free or else the very foundation of religion (*religionis fundamentum*) is destroyed:²⁹¹

For if the will is not free, there is no virtue in obedience, nor vice in disobedience. For what obedience and disobedience is possible where the faculty of the will cannot do otherwise than what it does? Consequently, all laws, whether divine or human, would be ridiculous and unjust. Promises and threats, exhortations and warnings would be futile. And rewards as well as punishments would be unjust and unequal.

The premise here, and one that underlies all of Limborch's theology, is that morality is undermined if man is not able to will other than what he does will. Unlike the pure act of understanding which necessarily assents to or suspends a conclusion depending upon the evidence, the will freely chooses to act or not act in accordance with the insight of understanding. This contrast is evident in these two theses which were presented to John Locke:²⁹²

An act of understanding, in so far as it is purely an act of understanding, is necessary and rests upon the weight of the reasons perceived by a man.

An act of willing is free, and a man has dominion over it and a faculty of eliciting or not eliciting it. If therefore there is any liberty in a judgment it proceeds from an act not of understanding but of willing.

²⁸⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, II, xxiii, 9: ...tendit in objectum sub ratione boni propositum.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, II, xxiii, 9: Voluntatis proprietates est libertas, qua voluntas imperium habet in actionem suam, eam vel eliciendi, vel non eliciendi; quae ita voluntati intima est, ut sine ea non sit voluntas.

²⁹¹ Ibid., II, xxiii, 9: Si enim voluntas non sit libera, nulla est virtus obedientiae, aut vitium inobedientiae: quae enim obedientia aut inobedientia esse potest, ubi voluntas facultatem non habet aliter agendi, quam agit? Proinde & omnes leges, tam divinae quam humanae, forent ridiculae & injustae. Promissa & minae, adhortationes & dehortationes, essent inutiles. Et tam praemia quam poenae, injustae ac iniquae.

²⁹² Limborch to John Locke, October 3, 1701 in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 3010.

Consequently, while the understanding may present the will with an approved conclusion, the will may freely decide not to act upon it. For example, the intellect may decide that murder is immoral, but the will may either act or not act in accordance with the decision of the intellect. In the latter instance, the pure act of the understanding is contaminated by the free action of the will (which may act upon passion as well as intellect). Limborch calls this irrationality:²⁹³

Again, a determination by which a man decrees that this is to be done, proceeds from the will. And this determination is made either in accordance with the persuasion of the understanding, and then it is rational; or it can be made contrary to it, and then it is devoid of reason: that is, it proceeds from carnal passion and does not in any wise heed the persuasion of the understanding.

The importance of this construction lies in the origin of faith in Limborch's system. In essence, faith is rational, but the will may choose to be irrational in its action since the will is not determined by the understanding but simply informed by it.²⁹⁴

We conclude that the understanding has no dominion over the will to properly and explicitly command it to do this or that. But its ultimate and highest act is judgment which suggests to the will that this is eligible, and among the eligibles, that this is good, this is better, etc. or to do this or omit this.

The role of the understanding, then, is to advise the will as to its action. It cannot dictate that action. However, the rational man will act in accordance with the advice of reason, but the irrational man is the one whose will ignores it's advice. In this, the will is free and the action of the intellect is necessary.

The essence of the liberty of the will is the ability to will this or that. In his discussion with John Locke, Limborch understands this freedom to extend, not simply to external actions, but also to the internal movements of the will. He summarizes his perspective in this selection:²⁹⁵

The word 'Liberty' denotes for me the dominion that a man has over his action. He who is not master of his action, or who cannot do what he wills is not free. But I think that this extends to all the actions of a man without any exception, as well to internal actions of the mind as to external of the body, so much so that the action of willing, which is an internal action of mind, is free also.

Consequently, the freedom of the will does not simply refer to physical movements of the body, but also refers to internal movements of the will itself. If a man is not able to will this or that (even though he may do neither), then he is not free. But if he wills to do this, and is restrained so that he cannot perform the function bodily, he is still not free. This has important consequences for the nature of the unregenerate man. If

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Limborch, *Theologica Christiana*, II, xxiii, 19: Concludimus, intellectum in voluntatem nullum habere dominium voluntati proprie & indirecte imperandi, hoc tibi faciendum: Sed ultimum ac summum illius actum esse iudicium, quo voluntati suggerit, hoc est eligible; & inter eligibilia, hoc est bonum, hoc melius, &c. vel, hoc expedit facere, hoc omittere.

²⁹⁵ Limborch to John Locke, October 3, 1701 in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 3010.

he posses free will, then he may not only act in a godly manner, but he may even, if he so chooses, will to do good. Limborch calls this ability of the will *indifferentia*. One who possesses *indifferentia* has the ability to act or not act while having all things necessary to the performance of either action. For instance, a man who is jailed does not have true *indifferentia* since he is unable to drink wine even though he may wish to do so since he cannot do what he wills. However, the imprisoned man is able to will whatever he desires, but he does not possess *indifferentia* because he cannot do everything he wills. In terms of the internal movements of the will, *indifferntia* exists only in the sense of internal actions which require nothing but the mind for completion.²⁹⁶ The will is free to desire whatever it wishes.

This liberty of the will in conjunction with the role of understanding is essential to the nature of man as man. There is nothing which can destroy the liberty of the will without reducing the nature of man to a subhuman level. Limborch insists that even in the state of sin, just as in the state of innocence, man has the power of free will or "active indifference." He summarizes his viewpoint in this section:²⁹⁷

This liberty is inseparable from the will that not only in the state of integrity did it have it, but also in every state, even the state of sin, liberty coincides with the will. For sin, because it is an act of free power, cannot destroy the free power of the will. For by its disordering it is not contrary to free will, but to virtue.

It is evident, then, that Limborch gives man in his fallen state essentially the same power of free action ("active indifference") with which man was created. This belongs to the essential psychology of man that he is able to act or not act with respect to both internal movements of the mind and external actions of the body.

The Image of God in Man

Limborch argues that the "whole man" (*totum hominem*) was created in the image of God.²⁹⁸ The image of God does not simply consist in the external body nor simply in the soul of man. Limborch insists that Scripture (Gen 1:26,27) regards the "whole man," body and soul, as constituting the image of God. This is true because the image of God in

²⁹⁶ Limborch, *Theologica Christiana*, II, xxiii, 21. Limborch and Locke were involved in a considerable discussion concerning the propriety of this term. In Limborch to Locke, October 3, 1701 in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 3010, he adds that the term is applicable to internal movements which have an end in themselves: "But the case is different with internal actions, which are performed in the mind alone: nothing is required for liberty in them except the free determination of the will. Thus he who in prision lusts after another man's wife, and cherishes that foul lust in his mind, and delights himself with it, lusts and sins freely" although there is no external action involved. According to Limborch, the will is free to lust or not to lust.

²⁹⁷ Limborch, *Theologica Christiana*, II, xxiii, 20: Estque haec libertas a voluntate inseparabilis; quae non tantum in statu integritatis locum habuit; sed & in omni statu, etiam peccati, voluntati competit. Peccatum enim, quia liberae potentiae est actio, ipsam potentiae libertatem destruere non potest: per inordinationem enim suam non est contraria libertati voluntatis, sed virtuti.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, II, xxiv, 1.

man is simply the dominion which God has given man over the earth. He explains his definition in this way.²⁹⁹

That image is nothing other than a certain excellent quality and eminence by which man resembles God especially. Moreover, this consists in the power and dominion which God gave man over all the things which he had created.

In this definition, it is important to distinguish between the potestas and the dominium. It is because man has been given certain abilities that he is able to exercise this dominion. Given abilities which resemble God (particularly an intellect and will), man is able to exercise dominion over God's other creatures. Limborch, therefore, refers to man as if he were a "visible God on earth."³⁰⁰ The image of God distinguishes man from the angels in that the angels do not have any dominion. The whole man bears the image of God because the whole man participates in this dominion. He argues that "both the body and soul concur (*concurrunt*) in this image of God." The soul, by the use of reason which instructs (*instructa est*), has the function of "subjecting all things to itself" (*omnia sibi subjicere potest*). This is not only true in the proper use of animals but reason makes use of the celestial bodies for the benefit of man. Further, the human form is superior to that of the animals (*figurae est erectae supra omnia animantia*). Consequently, man's body is adapted to his dominion over the animals. Limborch regards the ability to speak as a bodily function which God has given man as a means of dominion over the animal kingdom.³⁰¹

Limborch, therefore, denies that the image of God in man consists in either "original righteousness" (*justitiam originalem*) or "immortality." It is important to understand his reasons for this denial since they play a role in understanding how Adam did, in fact, sin of his own free volition. Limborch does not deny that Adam possessed certain characteristics which we do not possess. He argues that Adam was not created with a *tabula rasa* which is the condition of his descendents at birth. Rather, Adam was endowed with an actual knowledge of God's will.³⁰²

It is evident that the first humans in their primitive state were by far in a more perfect condition than when we were born into the world. For their mind was not a like a blank tablet which was destitute of all knowledge, but it was endowed with actual knowledge, and instructed by God with all necessary wisdom in that state to which was added also a capacity to acquire greater knowledge by reasoning, experience and revelation.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., II, xxiv, 2: Illa imago aliud nihil est, quam eximia quaedam qualitas & excellentia, qua homo Deum speciatim refert: haec autem est potestas & dominium quod Deus homini dedit in omnia a se creata.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., II, xxiv, 2: Hoc enim dominio Deum proprie refert, estque quasi visibilis Deus in terra super omnes Dei creaturas constitutus.

³⁰¹ Ibid., II, xxiv, 4.

³⁰² Ibid., II, xxiv, 5: Sane homines primos in primaevo suo statu longe perfectioris fuisse conditionis quam nos cum in lucem edimur, evidentissimum est. Non enim mens ipsorum fuit tabulae instar rasae, omnique cognitione destitutae; sed ipsi scientia actuali fuere praediti, & necessaria sapientia in statu illo a Deo instructi; aderat & capacitas ad scientiam ulteriorem acquirendum per ratiocinationem, experientiam, & revelationem.

Thus, Adam was endowed with a gift of knowledge which was sufficient in his state in order for him to please God. However, this is not to be interpreted in terms of a super natural gift of original righteousness, but merely the equipping of the original man (particularly his intellect) with all that was necessary for the exercising of his dominion over the earth.

The concept of "original righteousness" is repugnant to Limborch. The image of God does not depend upon it since "after this [supposed original] righteousness was lost through sin, man is, nevertheless, said to be made in the image of God" according to Gen 9:6 and Jas 3:9.³⁰³ Further, he argues that no Scripture ascribes righteousness to created man.³⁰⁴ On the contrary, Limborch simply speaks of a state of *integritas*. Man as created possessed perfect soundness and uprightness. One cannot properly attribute holiness to the original couple, but they were created "innocent and upright."³⁰⁵

This "uprightness" did not consist in active obedience (and consequent acquired righteousness), but in the condition of his creation. He was created without either righteousness or guilt. But Adam's *integritas* did not place him in a neutral position between good and evil. His endowed knowledge (which infants do not possess) informed his understanding and moved his will to good. Consequently, Limborch maintains that Adam had a "natural guidance" system (*rectitudinem habuit naturalem*) so that he broke no moral law such as to covet or to do anything "inordinate" (*inordinate*).³⁰⁶ This "guidance system" was reason alone which was informed by the endowment of actual knowledge. Limborch maintains that it was not necessary to forbid lying and perjury to Adam since "reason alone was sufficient" for man while in the "state of integrity."³⁰⁷ However, this *integritas* was not *justitia* since this is something which can only be achieved personally --it cannot be endowed. Further, one must not, according to Limborch, magnify this endowment of knowledge excessively. Adam, as man, retained the ability of active indifference by which he fell into sin. Endowed knowledge did not destroy his nature as man so as to prevent him from sinning, but neither was there anything which necessitated his sinning (such as God's decree).³⁰⁸

The image of God, according to Limborch, does not consist in immortality. While it is argued that that immortality belongs to the soul by its very nature, the image of God consists in the whole man, both body and soul. If, then, immortality belongs to the nature of being in God's image, then man's created body was immortal. However, Limborch maintains that the natural body of Adam was inherently mortal. He believes that if Adam

³⁰³ Ibid., II, xxiv, 8: quia post justitiam illam per peccatum amissam nihilominus homo ad imaginem Dei factus dicitur.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., II, xxiv, 6: he gives this response to the Contra-Remonstrant objection based on Eccl 7:29, Sed ex hisce verbis adeo generalibus non evincitur talis justitia, quam illi requirunt. Etiam status ille integritatis, quem nos descripsimus, rectitudo est: & si majorem requiramus, oportet ut verbis specialioribus ea alibi sit expressa.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., III, iii, 5: Tum, nec proprie parentes nostri creati fuere sancti, sed innocentes & integri.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., II, xxiv, 5.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., III, ii, 5: Non constat interdictum mendacii & perjuria primo homini esse factum: nec erat necessarium; ratio sola sufficebat, quae hominem in statu integritatis in officio continebat.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., II, xxiv, 5, 6.

had never sinned, he would have never died. But this is not to concede that Adam was mortal.³⁰⁹

Admittedly, it cannot be doubted that the first humans, if they had not sinned, would not have died. For death was the penalty of sin with which God threatened man if they sinned...Indeed, the immorality of man cannot be correctly inferred from this; of course, mortality is one thing; death or the necessity of dying is another. The very formation of the body from the dust of the earth supports this truth since as it was composed out its principles. Consequently it is dissolvable to dust again. Even in the state of integrity, it needed food and drink for its sustenance.

It is only due to the promise of God, exhibited in the tree of life, that God preserved man in his innocent state. This promise of life was removed when man sinned (effected by the removal of the tree of life). Thus, man was created mortal, but because of the tree of life, it was not necessary that man die. Only sin brought the necessity of dying.³¹⁰ The removal of the tree of life because of sin made man "liable to a necessary death."³¹¹

In conclusion, like free will, Limborch believes that man, whether in the state of integrity or sin, possesses the image of God by virtue of his rational soul and superior form. With respect to the image itself, there is no difference between Adam as created and his descendants except that Adam was endowed with mature knowledge. This is an important point since it implies that man's essential abilities in the state of sin are the same as those with which Adam was created. The only difference between Adam and his descendants is that the latter are innocent but not upright (*integritas*) since they are not endowed with actual knowledge at birth. Infants are born with a *tabula rasa*.³¹² The innocence of infants is deduced from the same premise as the denial of original righteousness, that is, guilt and righteousness can only be personally and voluntarily acquired.

Fallen Man

The necessity of grace can only be seen by an examination of the need of grace. It is fallen man which needs grace. The purpose of this section is to examine the exact need which man has in relation to grace. In the light of this examination, it will be possible to deduce the concept of grace's necessity in Limborch. The necessity of grace will be in direct proportion to the need which man has for that grace.

The Sin of Adam

³⁰⁹ Ibid., II, xxiv, 10: Sane primum hominem, nisi pecasset, non fuiss mortiturum, dubitandum non est: mors enim poena peccati fuit, quam Deus homini, si peccaret, comminatus est, Genes. II.17...Inde vero non recte hominis immortalitas infertur; aliud quippe est mortalitas; aliud mors seu moriendi necessitas. Imo ipsa corporis formatio ex pulvere terrae huic veritati adstipulatur: Sicut enim ex principiis suis coaluit, ita etiam in ea dissolubile est; indiget cibo ac potu ad sui sustentationem, etiam in statu integritatis, Genes. I.29. II.15,16.

³¹⁰ Ibid., II, xxiv, 10.

³¹¹ Ibid., III, ii, 4: adeo ut homo ex statu immortalita tis dejectus, necessariae morti obnoxius foret.

³¹² Ibid., II, xxiv, 5.

Adam possessed *integritas*. He was endowed with actual knowledge. In conjunction with the use of reason, he had sufficient knowledge and ability to remain sinless. In particular, it was unnecessary for God to reveal to Adam any moral precepts of God. Reason itself was sufficient in the primitive state.

Limborch views the pre-fall state as having the nature of a trial. If Adam had not sinned, "God, after a satisfactory examination of Adam's obedience, would have translated him into a celestial life without the intervention of death."³¹³ However, this translation would not have been based upon some prior "covenant of works," but grounded in God's free grace. God made no promise of eternal life to Adam. Only one positive law was given to Adam, and no promise is attached to it except the threat of death.³¹⁴

Consequently, Adam's trial consisted primarily, if not exclusively, in the positive prohibition to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam had sufficient *integritas* to obey moral principles. The trial rested in the issue of whether Adam would obey the only positive (amoral) command given him. It was the "sole transgression" of that "positive law" by which Adam fell from his state of integrity.³¹⁵

Limborch, as would be expected from his description of the psychology of man, maintains that the sin of Adam was a free act. This freedom excludes any concept of necessity or determination, external or internal.³¹⁶ This freedom not only derives from the nature of man himself, but from the fact that Satan does not have any irresistible influence over man. Consequently, if there were a necessity involved, it had to be derived from God since it does not rest in man himself (the will is essentially free) nor in the Devil. Limborch regards such a conclusion as abominable:³¹⁷

Of this kind {those who lay upon Adam a fatal necessity of sinning} are those who maintain that God decreed to display his mercy to some of his works, but justice to others. In order to carry it out, he decreed that the first man should fall into sin, and in him all men. But by this reasoning Adam is placed under a necessity of sinning by the divine decree, and consequently Adam is absolved of any guilt for sin which is cast upon God as the cause of this and consequently all sins which flow from there. This is horrendous, and a blasphemy which is inexcusable.

³¹³ Ibid., III, ii, 5: Deum explorata satis Adami obedientia ipsum in coelestem vitam nulla intercedente morte translaturum fuisse.

³¹⁴ Ibid, III, ii, 9.

³¹⁵ Ibid., III, ii, 9.

³¹⁶ Ibid., III, ii, 16: Ex dictis liquet, primos homines libere praeceptum Dei transgressos esse; neque ulla externa impulsione determinatos aut interna aliqua determinatione, aliove quovis modo necessitados.

³¹⁷ Ibid., III, ii, 17: Tales sunt, qui statuunt Deum ab aeterno decrevisse erga quosdam ostendere suam misericordiam, erga alios justitiam; & ut finem illum obtinere possit, decrevisse ut primus homo in peccatum incideret, & in illo omnes homines. Verum hac ratione peccandi necessitas Adam per decretum divinum imponitur; ac per consequens Adamo a peccandi culpa absolvitur eaque in Deum tanquam huius, & per consequens omnium inde profluentium peccatorum, causam conjicitur. Quod est horrendum est, & a blasphemia excusari nequit.

Further, if Adam's action had not been free, there could not have been any application of guilt to him, nor would he be liable to punishment. If Adam could not avoid his action, then it is unjust to punish him for it.³¹⁸

Therefore, God endowed Adam with sufficient knowledge and ability to obey his moral precepts. However, in order to test his obedience, God gave Adam one positive command in the form of a prohibition. Adam had the ability to freely obey or disobey. His own integrity, knowledge and reason argued in favor of obedience. But the influence of Satan convinced Eve to disobey. Influenced by Eve, Adam freely sinned as well. If Adam had obeyed, he would have inherited eternal life by grace. However, Adam and Eve failed the examination. Consequently, they bore the punishment due to their free act of sin.

The Effects of Adam's Sin

The threat attached to the prohibition given to Adam, according to Limborch, simply refers to the separation of the body and soul in physical death. More particularly, it is the threat of a "necessary death" by way of the removal of the tree of life and exclusion from paradise.³¹⁹ Thus, God placed upon Adam the necessity of dying as punishment for his sin. This was accomplished, not by some metaphysical change of Adam's body, but by the simple removal of the tree of life from the earth.

Adam's sin did not directly affect any of his posterity. This viewpoint is grounded in the principle that "sin, inasmuch as it is a voluntary and personal action, does not reach any farther than the one who sins."³²⁰ Consequently, the effects of Adam's sin do not directly affect his posterity either by way of guilt or punishment. The posterity of Adam is neither guilty of his sin, nor punished for it.

However, this does not mean that Adam's sin did not have some indirect effect upon his posterity. While he denies that any guilt is imputed to the children of Adam, he does argue that man has suffered the consequences of Adam's sin in both physical death and corruption. Yet, both of these factors must be carefully explained so that Limborch is not misunderstood. The consequences of both physical death and corruption are not properly regarded as punishments of Adam's posterity. Rather, they are universal consequences of Adam's punishment. Punishment, according to Limborch, properly belongs to the one who sins:³²¹

God does not punish an innocent posterity for Adam's sin because punishment does not exceed the crime. But they are subjected to the miseries of this life and finally death because they were born out of sinful Adam, not that he punishes Adam's sin in them.

In order to explain this distinction, Limborch maintains that there are three kinds of evil: (1) the evil of guilt (*culpae*); (2) the evil of punishment (*poenae*) and (3) natural

³¹⁸ Ibid., III, ii, 16.

³¹⁹ Ibid., III, ii, 4.

³²⁰ Ibid., III, iii, 21: Peccatum autem, utpote voluntaria & personalis actio, peccantem non egreditur.

³²¹ Ibid., III, iii, 19: Deum innoxios posteros non punire ob peccatum Adami; poena enim delictum non excedit: Sed malis huius vitae, ac tandem morti subjicere, quia ex Adamo peccatore geniti sunt: Non ut in ipsis Adami peccatum puniat.

evil (*naturale*).³²² The evil of guilt can only be imputed to the one who personally sins. The evil of punishment properly belongs only to the one who is personally guilty. Natural evils, however, are the various miseries which come to other individuals by reason of another's punishment for their personal sins. In the case of Adam, while only he was directly punished for his sin by the necessity of dying, his posterity must suffer that evil as a consequence of his punishment. Thus, the effects of Adam's sin must be seen as the general introduction of misery into the world rather than an imputation of guilt or an administration of punishment to his posterity. Limborch explains himself:³²³

For it is not to be believed that the sin of Adam only affected himself, which is said to be the error of Pelagius; but all the ills into which he fell by sin are also extended to his posterity since they are all excluded from paradise not any less than Adam and Eve...This death, however, does not properly have anything to do with a punishment inflicted upon posterity since it is not possible to punish innocents according to the sins of another, but it is only a natural necessity of dying derived from the punishment of death inflicted upon Adam.

The only effect that Adam's sin has upon his posterity is the introduction of *mala* (unfortunate consequences) into the world. They are natural evils. Consequently, these *mala* are not directly related to Adam's personal sin. The result in the theology of Limborch is that any view which implies a personal relationship with Adam's sin is rejected. Man's relation to Adam's sin is ultimately indirect and impersonal. On the basis of this principle, Limborch denies the imputation of guilt to Adam's posterity and any kind of propagated corruption.

The Imputation of Guilt

Limborch denies that there is any imputation of Adam's personal guilt to his posterity. He advances four arguments to establish his position. They may be summarized in this way:³²⁴

1. Scripture nowhere affirms that Adam's guilt was imputed to his posterity.
2. Since God pardoned Adam's sin, it would be unjust for God to impute that sin to his posterity.
3. Scripture explicitly states that God does not impute the guilt of a father's sin to his children (cf. Ezek 18:2, 3, 20; Deut 24:16).
4. Scripture affirms that every man will be judged by the works which he does in his own body, and it cannot be said that they committed Adam's sin in their own body (cf. Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 5:10).

³²² Ibid., III, v, 24.

³²³ Ibid., III, iii, 1: Non enim credendum Adami peccatum ipsi soli nocuisse: qui dicitur error fuisse Pelagii; sed & omnia mala in quae ob peccatum incidit, etiam ab ipso in posteros propagata sunt: exclusi quippe omnes sunt, non minus quam Adamus & Eva, ex paradiso...Mors autem haec non habet rationem poenae proprie dictae in posteris: fieri enim nequit, ut insontes propter alterius peccatum puniantur; sed est naturalis tantum moriendi necessitas, ab Adamo mortis poena punito in ipsos derivata.

³²⁴ Ibid., III, iii, 9-12.

These points are Biblically-oriented. But the principle which underlies each of them is what is most important to Limborch. The overriding principle is that "there is no sin but what is personal."³²⁵ Consequently, "sin, as a voluntary and personal action, does not reach any farther than the person who commits it."³²⁶ Since mankind's relationship with Adam is fundamentally indirect and impersonal, it is impossible that his guilt be imputed to his posterity.

The controlling factor of this presupposition is Limborch's definition of sin as a personal moral action which is contrary to natural or revealed law. Sin is essentially the voluntary, personal transgression of the law.³²⁷ As a result, "the sins of every man are certainly personal actions which do not reach any farther and neither are they capable of being passed from one man to another."³²⁸ On this basis, he argues that the phrase "original sin" in reference to infants is improper because that which is voluntary in nature, as sin is, cannot be said to be innate to man.³²⁹ The only circumstance in which it is possible for the personal action of one man to represent another is if the latter empowers the former.³³⁰ But, of course, this was impossible in the case of Adam since his posterity was unable to empower him. Therefore, since sin is an essentially personal action which arises out of one's own volition, it is impossible that one person be held responsible for another's sin unless there is prior consent to a personal representation.

Consequently, Limborch maintains that infants are born free of guilt. They are innocent. Infants, therefore, are not subject to eternal death since it only applies to those who are "guilty of voluntary transgression of the commands of God."³³¹ However, their condition is not the same as Adam's when he was created. They not only do not possess integrity, but there are other consequences which have befallen all mankind because of Adam's sin.

The Corruption of Fallen Man

While Limborch denies that the term "original sin" may apply to the imputation of guilt, he does believe that it may be used to describe the various misfortunes (*mala*) which have fallen upon man because of Adam's sin. Yet, it would be "improper to call it

³²⁵ Ibid., III, iii, 17: nullum enim datur peccatum nisi personale.

³²⁶ Ibid., III, iii, 21: Peccatum autem, utpote voluntaria & personalis actio, peccantem non egreditur. This fundamental thesis is repeated in almost the exact words in Ibid., III, iv, 18: ...quod est personalis cuiuscunque hominis actio; peccantemque non egreditur

³²⁷ Ibid., IV, iv, 1.

³²⁸ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Rom. 5:18: peccata quippe sunt cuiusque hominis actiones personales, quae peccantem non egrediuntur, neque ab eo in alium transire possunt.

³²⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, iii, 4: quod enim originaliter nobis inest peccatum proprie dici non potest: quia peccatum est voluntarium; nasci autem, ac proinde cum hac aut illa qualitate nasci, involuntarium.

³³⁰ Ibid., III, iii, 20: Non potest alius actione aliqua alterius personam sustinere, nisi autoritate ab illo instructus. In his *Commentarius*, cv. Rom. 5:12, Limborch states: Nemo in alio peccare potest, nisi accedat aut mandatum, aut concilium, aut assensus.

³³¹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, iv, 23: Illa vero solos peccatores, voluntaria malitia praecepta Dei transgredientes, manet.

sin" in a strict sense.³³² Further, the *mala* do not diminish the power or capacity of the soul, but rather enhance to the strength of the flesh as a result of the loss of *integritas*. The *mala* include not only the consequence of physical death, but also pertain to the condition in which infants are born into the fallen world. Limborch maintains that "men today are born less pure than that with which Adam was tempered, and with a certain inclination to sin."³³³ It is important to understand exactly what Limborch means by this condition of inferior purity.

Limborch's theology at this point is founded upon the presupposition that Adam "transmitted whatsoever he had to his posterity, but only such things as could be communicated to them by generation."³³⁴ However, this implicitly excludes several particulars. The soul is not transmittable since it is spiritual, not material. Neither sin nor righteousness are transmittable since they are personal. However, Limborch does speak of a certain "inclination" or "propensity" to sin which is derived from Adam. Infants are born into a different condition than that in which Adam was created. Adam was created both innocent and upright (*integritas*), but infants are only born innocent. Adam had no inclinations to sin. In fact, he had just the opposite. He possessed a "natural guidance" system for proper moral conduct. But infants are born with a corrupt propensity. This is fundamentally a strengthening of the flesh in its influence over the will.

Limborch, however, does not regard this inclination as itself sinful. It does not render infants guilty before God.³³⁵

But that inclination is not properly called sin, or even a habit of sin transmitted to them by Adam; but only a natural inclination which belongs to the gratification of the flesh which properly springs from the constitution of the body which we know is transmitted by the immediate parents.

Strictly speaking, Limborch does not consider this inclination to be derived immediately from Adam. He argues that if each infant immediately derived his "inclinations" from Adam, then the propensity would be equal in all men. But these propensities are unequal. Consequently, they are derived from the immediate parents rather than Adam himself. The only significance of Adam is that he introduced sin, and therefore became the first in whom these propensities were manifested. The individual propensities of every man, however, are transmitted through the immediate parents who add or detract from the propensities given to them by their parents. Thus, there is no equal distribution of an Adamic nature or state. Every individual has different propensities depending upon the origin of his descent.³³⁶

³³² Ibid., III, iii, 4: Si vero per peccatum originis intelligatur malum illud quod iam explicuimus, lubentes id admittimus; sed addimus, improprie illud vocari peccatum.

³³³ Ibid., III, iv, 1: Fatemur hodie homines minus puros nasci quam Adamus conditus est, & cum quadam inclinatione ad peccandum. Cf. III, iii, 4: Fatemur etiam infantes nasci minus puros quam Adamus fuit creatus, & cum quadam propensione ad peccandum.

³³⁴ Ibid., III, iv, 18: Adamum quicquid habuit in posteros propagasse; sed solummodo ea quae per propagationem communicari possunt.

³³⁵ Ibid., III, iv, 1: Verum inclinatio illa proprie dictum peccatum non est, aut peccati habitus ab Adamo in ipsos progagatus: sed naturalis tantum inclinatio habendi id quod carni gratum est: quae proprie oritur a temperamento corporis quod a proximis parentibus propagari scimus.

³³⁶ Ibid., III, iii, 4.

According to this Remonstrant theologian, "original corruption" pertains simply to the inclinations to sin which are occasioned by the need to gratify the flesh. This inclination is apparently a physical one since Limborch always relates it to the needs of the flesh. In fact, he likens the differences in inclinations from one man to the next to the differences of appetite.³³⁷ It is our physical constitutions, immediately inherited from our parents, which constitute the source of the diversity of objects to which we are inclined. What is pleasing to one, may not be to another. This is a difference of *temperamento* which variously influence a man. These inclinations, because they are sometimes contrary to God's will in certain circumstances, become tests of our obedience or disobedience.³³⁸ In Limborch's view, these inclinations are the first movements of concupiscence but are not considered sin until accompanied by an act of delectation where the mind dwells upon it with pleasure toward an unlawful object.³³⁹ Thus, the inclination is not sin until the will decides to pursue what the understanding has deemed an unlawful fulfillment of carnal needs. While sin itself is not transmitted or propagated from father to son, inclinations to gratify certain carnal vices are. But these are not sinful in themselves. Rather, they are "only the source and origin of sin" if a man gives in to them.³⁴⁰

This inborn "original corruption," however, does not reduce the capacity to do good or evil. "Original corruption" does not consist of an inherent inability to do good. While Adam lost his innocence and integrity, and his "appetite was more inclined to evil" (*appetitum magis inclinasse in malum*) after his fall, it is not true that he lost any capacity to act righteously.³⁴¹ The exercise of a particular act of sin does not diminish the capacity of the human nature to act to the contrary. Limborch argues that "Adam did not contract an inability for the doing of good in the future because an act of sin does not remove the potential for the contrary."³⁴² One free action does not render another free action impossible. Man's freedom cannot be destroyed without destroying man. Limborch argues that man still retained within him the "law of nature, or the light of right reason by which one can discern between the decent and the indecent, and it is the rule of human action."³⁴³ However, while one's freedom cannot be diminished, it may be corrupted. This

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid., III, iv, 1: Pro diversa enim temperamenti ratione animus hominis diversimode a variis objectis afficitur, quodque uni gratum, alteri ingratum est: inde diversae adeo in hominibus cupiditates, dum unusquisque, quod pro temperamenti sui ratione ipsi gratum est, ac aversatur ingratum. Quia vero carni nostrae grata plerumque voluntati divinae adversantur, quoniam Deus in hisce abnegandis promptam animi nostri obedientiam explorare vult, inde est, quod illa inclinatio objecta carni nostrae grata sit etiam inclinatio in peccatum.

³³⁹ Ibid., IV, iv, 5.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., III, iv, 6: At illa inclinatio, uti vidimus, peccatum non est: Est tamen fons & origo peccatorum, si homo illi indulgeat.

³⁴¹ Ibid., III, ii, 24.

³⁴² Ibid., III, ii, 25: Non tamen contraxit Adamus impotentiam ullum in posterum bonum operandi: actus enim peccati non tollit potentiam in contrarium.

³⁴³ Ibid., III, vi, 2: Voluit Deus superesse legem naturae, seu rectae rationis lucem, quae discrimen inter honestum ac turpe dictaret, & actionum humanarum regula foret.

corruption is not innate, but learned. Limborch strongly opposes the Contra- Remonstrant view which argues that "original corruption."³⁴⁴

is truly and properly called sin, by which the intellect and will and all the affections are so depraved that they are only inclined to evil, even that all men are by nature prone to hate God and neighbor.

However, Limborch does not deny that the will and understanding might be corrupted. It is the origin of this corruption which is the issue between the Remonstrants and the Contra- Remonstrants.

This Remonstrant theologian insists that this kind of corruption is not obtained by nature. Rather, it is the result of the habitual custom of sinning. It is, in fact, a process of education by which man learns the practice of bad habits. He argues that "all men are not by nature unteachable and perverse since indocility does not spring from nature, nor is it born in men; but is acquired by education and chiefly by wicked habit."³⁴⁵ It is only in this process that one's understanding, will and affections are corrupted. While this process yields differing degrees of corruption, the basic effect of this education is enslavement to sin. The gravity of this slavery is evidenced in Scripture, according to Limborch, by the fact that it is almost impossible for a man to free himself from this habit.³⁴⁶ Even though the "law of nature" and "the light of reason" are "sufficient to direct men," nevertheless they are *invalida* to extinguish the dominion of sin.³⁴⁷ The meaning of the term *invalidus* is weak or feeble. In this context, it is not insufficiency or impotence, but a weakening to such an extent that man is rendered practically powerless. For Limborch never states that it is absolutely impossible for man to stop sinning. If he had so stated, it would have undermined his presuppositions concerning the nature of man's free will. Rather, he speaks in terms of the difficulty of righteousness instead of its impossibility. He does not speak of an impotency. Though it is almost impossible, it is actually only extremely difficult. Limborch, therefore, maintains only a practical impossibility over against a moral or natural impossibility. The Arminian theologian Richard Watson concurs with this assessment of Limborch. In contrast to his own position of moral impossibility, he notes the different position of the Remonstrant Limborch.³⁴⁸

As the fact of a natural inclination to evil cannot be successfully combated, some have taken a milder view of the case; and, allowing these tendencies to various excesses, account for them by their being natural tendencies to what is pleasing; and so, for this reason, they deny them to

³⁴⁴ Ibid., III, iv, 3: ...quae vere ac proprie sit peccatum, per quam intellectus & voluntas omnesque affectus adeo sunt depravati, ut solummodo in malum inclinent, imo omnes homines natura propensi sint ad odium Dei & proximi

³⁴⁵ Ibid., IV, xi, 6: Non ergo omnes natura indociles sunt & improbi: non enim indocilitas oritur ex natura, hominique connata est; sed institutione, & potissimum prava assuetudine adsciscitur.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., III, i, 8: Quam gravis haec miseria sit, illud nobis abunde documento est, quod Scriptura inter impossibilia, id est, maxime difficilia ponat, inveteratam peccati consuetudinem, abjicere, Jerem. xiii.23.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., III, vi, 2: Verum licet illa in se sufficiens esset ad hominem dirigendum, tamen ad peccati dominium exstinguendum plane invalida fuit.

³⁴⁸ Richard Watson, *The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1858), X, p. 479. He cites *Theologia Christiana*, III, iv as proof of his assertion.

be sinful, until they are complied with, and approved by the will. This appears to be the view of Limborch, and some of the later Divines of the Arminian school, who on this and other points, very materially departed from the tenets of their master.

While Watson argued, like Arminius, that fallen man is morally unable to will the good, Limborch argues that man can and does will the good but with difficulty. The measure of difficulty is variable and is to be contrasted with Adam himself for whom moral accomplishment, in his created state, was effortless.

The Condition and Punishment of Infants

As noted previously, Limborch believes that Adam's descendents are born innocent. They do not bear the guilt of any sin at birth. It has also been pointed out that unlike Adam who was created with *integritas*, they are born with a *tabula rasa*. Further, it is maintained that infants are born "less pure" than Adam was created as a result of the first movements of concupiscence. It should be noted, however, that the "less pure" state of infancy is synonymous with the *tabula rasa* of their minds. It was Adam's *integritas* that gave Adam the ability to control and guide his carnal drives. Since infants lack this *integritas*, their state is "less pure." Without *integritas*, the carnal drives lead man to sin. In this way, men are induced into the habit of sinning. This is the extent of the personal corruption which they bear at birth. They simply do not possess what Adam possessed.

Since infants do not bear any guilt of sin, they cannot be subjected to eternal torment. However, Limborch believes that infants do suffer what might be considered a punishment of some kind. He refers favorably to the scholastic concept of the punishment of loss which maintains that unbaptized infants are excluded from the Kingdom of God, but do not suffer pain. They only suffer the loss of the Kingdom. Limborch makes this comment upon the view:³⁴⁹

This opinion, if taken liberally, is not to be rejected. For although original sin, as they call it, is not truly and properly called sin, yet it does not properly deserve punishment. Seeing that in fact death derived from Adam to all men, it has some analogy with punishment. We do not greatly dispute that it is called punishment, only that it not be properly called punishment, but it be called accordingly by analogy.

Thus, Limborch does accept some kind of "punishment" of infants. But this is restricted to physical death.

However, this physical death does not imply a loss of the Kingdom since Christ has universally reversed this consequence of the sin of Adam. Limborch argues that while infants are not saved from any guilt of sin, they are saved from physical death by the resurrection. Thus, infants are not delivered in themselves, but only in Christ Jesus. He makes this clear in this selection:³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ Ibid., III, v, 1: Haec sententia, si benigne accipiatur, rejicienda non est. Sicut enim peccatum originis, quod vocant, non est verum ac proprie dictum peccatum: ita etiam poenam proprie non meretur. Quoniam vero mors in omnes homines ab Adamo derivata analogiam cum poena habet; non multum repugnamus, ut poena vocetur, modo constet poenam non esse proprie dictam, sed analogice ita vocatam.

He is their savior, not because he cleanses them from sin since it is not consistent with infants, but because he frees them from death which they have derived from Adam by natural generation, and from which there is no liberation except through Christ. Therefore, we maintain that infants dying in infancy are saved, not by their natural innocence, but by the redemption of Jesus Christ.

This salvation is not based upon whether or not the infant is baptized, but is rooted in the universal covenant of God by which he has freed all men from natural death through the resurrection.³⁵¹ Consequently, infants do suffer, by analogy, a punishment of loss in that they suffer physical death, this punishment will ultimately be reversed and they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Common Grace

Limborch draws the traditional distinction between common and special grace. The former refers to natural religion and the latter involves special revelation. It is important to understand the nature and implications of this division for Limborch. In his view, God bestows and effects his special grace in the same mode or manner in which he bestows and effects his common grace. Thus, an understanding of the nature and necessity of common grace lays the foundation for an understanding his concept of special grace.

The Nature of Common Grace

God's calling of man to salvation consists of both common and special grace. The necessity of this call has already been indicated in the discussion of the fallen state. Limborch describes it in these terms:³⁵²

The necessity of this calling is abundantly inferred from the state of human misery and corruption before it. For they are destitute of the knowledge of things necessary for salvation, in respect of which they are called "darkness," Eph 5:8 and "blind," Acts 26:18, and they have directly wandered from the true knowledge of God.

The point is that man, lacking Adam's *integritas*, was led into the habit of sinning by his carnal desires. The habitual practice and example of sin has enslaved man such that his will is corrupted and his intellect darkened. Therefore, man is dependent upon God's call for knowledge of him.

However, not all men are equally corrupt. Limborch delineates three broad categories of sinners. While all men are corrupt and unable of themselves to know the

³⁵⁰ Ibid., III, iv, 21: Servator est illorum, non quia eos mundat a peccato, quod in infantes non cadit: sed quia liberat a morte, quam per naturalem generationem ab Adamo trahunt, & ex qua nulla nisi per Christum datur liberatio. Statuimus ergo infantes in infantia morientes servari, non per naturalem ipsorum innocentiam, sed per redemptionem Jesu Christi. Cf. III, i, 14; III, v, 4-6.

³⁵¹ Ibid., III, v, 2, 8.

³⁵² Ibid., IV, xi, 3: Necessitas huius vocationis abunde colligitur ex misero corruptoque hominum ante eam statu: erant enim destitute notitia rerum ad salutem necessariarum; eoque respectu vocantur tenebrae, Eph. v.8 & coeci, Act. xxvi.18 aberrabantque plane a vera Dei cognitione.

way of salvation, that does not imply that all men are "equally unsuitable to believing the evangelical call."³⁵³ There are different degrees of sinners.³⁵⁴ He enumerates three particular categories: (1) Most Corrupt (*Maxime Corrupti*); (2) Less Corrupt (*Minus Corrupti*); and (3) Most Reasonable (*Maxime Dociles*). The first category is those who have "laid aside all use of right reason" and devoted themselves to the pursuit of various lusts so that "no reason" could persuade them to desist.³⁵⁵ The second category are less corrupt in the sense that "they have not spurned all the dictates of right reason" so that some amount of "docility" remains in them even though they are more or less accustomed to sinning.³⁵⁶ The third category refers to those who "serve God according to the knowledge which they have" but who still remain enslaved to certain vices from which only a knowledge of the Gospel could free them.³⁵⁷ As examples of this category, Limborch lists Cornelius, Nathaniel, Lydia and the Eunuch. These individuals have made the most beneficial use of common grace. As a result, they will "believe the words of the gospel as soon as they are announced."³⁵⁸

It is important to note that Limborch's classification of sinners depends upon how they use "correct or right reason." This is the essence of common grace for him. It is, in fact, the essence of conversion. Thus, common grace is necessary because it prepares man's use of reason, that is, it prepares him for conversion. Common grace is necessary since it is the agent of preparation. He states that "the very use of right reason, through which men are prepared for the grace of the gospel, is the fruit of universal grace."³⁵⁹ This does not mean that those who have not correctly used their reason might never be given special grace, but it does mean that those who do not correctly use their reason will never receive efficacious special grace. This belies a fundamental thesis of Limborch's theology. Conversion is rooted in the correct use of reason. Consequently, common grace is necessary for salvation in the sense that it bestows this docility in man which prepares him for the reception of special grace.

The Mode of Common Grace

³⁵³ Ibid., IV, xi, 4: ...non tamen omnium aequalis est corruptio, nec per consequens omnes aequae sunt inepti ad fidem vocationi Euangelicae praebendam.

³⁵⁴ Ibid: Sed peccatorum diversi sunt gradus.

³⁵⁵ Ibid: Sunt quidam, qui omnem rectae rationis usum excusserunt, seque ita totos uni sive pluribus peccatis manciparunt, ut se nulla ratione ab eo avelli permittant, neque ullam prorsus disciplinam meliorem velint admittere, etiam quando ipsis offertur.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., IV, xi, 5: ...sed tamen non omne rectae rationis dictamen respicientes; in quibus proinde quaedam docilitas superest; eaque in aliis pro peccatorum & peccandi assuetudine diversa, vel major vel minor.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., IV, xi, 6: Tandem quidam hisce omnibus meliores, sed pauci admodum, Deo seviunt secundum notitiam quam habent; sed tamen, quia Euangelii cognitione destituti sunt, etiam quibusdam vitiis laborant, a quibus per Euangelium mundari debent, virtutibusque destituuntur quas non nisi per Euangelii gratiam acquirere possunt.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.: ...talesque ordinarie, quamprimum Euangelii verbum ipsis annuntiatur, credunt.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., IV, xi, 12: Ipse rectae rationis usus, per quem homines ad gratiam Euangelicam praeparantur, fructus est gratiae universalioris.

In the process of his argument, Limborch rhetorically asks from where this docility proceeds. This is his answer:³⁶⁰

From that common and general grace which God communicates through his works of creation and providence to all men. God not only gives men reason as a torch which leads them in all their actions, but also through works of creation and providence he calls men to himself which excite their own reason to contemplate the most merciful, wise and powerful creator and governor of all things, and recognize and give reverence that they might obtain his favor.

It is apparent from this quotation that this grace involves nothing more than natural revelation. He supports his conclusion with several texts of Scripture including Ps 19:1; Acts 14:16,17; 17:26; Rom 1:18,19. By reason of the concreated gift of docility, man is able to recognize and fear God as the creator and governor. Thus, for common grace to be effectual, it must involve the use of right reason. In fact, Limborch maintains that a failure to excite these docile faculties which are the "seeds of religion" (*semina religionis*) incurs guilt.³⁶¹ Consequently, because man has the responsibility to come to a clear knowledge of God's existence and providence by the use of reason, it is certain that Limborch believes that all men, whatever their corrupt state, have the latent ability to correctly reason to such a conclusion, and that some men, in fact, do.

The Effect and Limitations of Common Grace

The effect of common grace is conformity to natural religion. Limborch argues that while he admits the necessity of special revelation for a full explanation of the principles of religion, yet man is able to come to an understanding of natural religion without supernatural aid. By the use of reason, one is not only led to an acknowledgement of God's existence, but one can also discover the common moral principles which govern mankind. To the Jew Uriel Acosta, Limborch comments that "it is so far true, that the law of nature is a common rule of action to all men, and impressed upon their minds, forasmuch as the first principles of that law are discoverable by their own light, and deductible from reason."³⁶² Consequently, a man without special grace may come to a reverential knowledge of God, exercise his free will in obedience to basic moral principles and live in harmony with natural religion. Limborch argues that with the assistance of common grace a truly pious and good work can be done in conformity with

³⁶⁰ Ibid., IV, xi, 7: A gratia illa communi ac generali, quam Deus per opera Creationis ac Providentiae omnibus hominibus communicat. Siquidem Deus non tantum hominibus rationem dedit, ut fax esset quae omnibus ipsorum actionibus praeluceat; sed & per opera Creationis ac Providentiae homines ad se vocat, ipsorumque rationem excitat, ut ea contemplando benignissimum, sapientissimum ac potentissimum creatorem, omniumque gubernatorem, agnoscant, & debite reveantur, ut ita favorem eius consequantur.

³⁶¹ Ibid., III, iv, 2.

³⁶² Limborch, in *Uriel Acosta: A Specimen of Human Life*, ed. unknown (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1967), p. 100. This is a translation of a tract which appears at the end of the 1687 edition of *De Veritate Religionis*.

natural religion.³⁶³ However, common grace of itself cannot bestow salvation in Christ. Limborch makes this clear:³⁶⁴

That common grace might indeed stimulate men to perform general duties of religion toward God which consequently please God by reason of the state in which they are; not however to the obtaining of eternal life.

Obviously, those salutary works by which man receives eternal life are only completed in the gospel and impossible to produce, certainly faith in Jesus Christ and conversion which comes from faith, except by the grace of God revealed and made known in the gospel.

Since faith in Christ and repentance are not based upon natural revelation, and they are necessary for eternal life, common grace cannot bestow salvation. This salvation specifically refers to the remission of sins by the grace of God exhibited in Jesus Christ. It should be noted, however, that here special grace is nothing more than additional revelation. It does not involve a direct, personal working of the Holy Spirit. The distinction between common and special grace is not the difference between an indirect and direct work of God, but the difference consists in the amount of knowledge available concerning God's law, works, threats and promises. In this light, Limborch's comment on the necessity of special revelation to Acosta is interesting:³⁶⁵

As the law of nature, therefore is insufficient of itself to stop the growth of evil, and to restrain the passions of mankind, God has been pleased to strengthen it with the addition of revelation, which, by more powerful motives, viz., the promise of eternal happiness, and threatening of future misery, might check the impetuosity of human nature, and prevail with men to prefer their duty to sensual pleasures.

Therefore, special revelation gives "such truths as were not discoverable by the light of nature," but after their manifestation appear to be "agreeable to it and tend to carry it to a greater degree of perfection."³⁶⁶

Nevertheless, it is maintained that those who are deprived of the knowledge of the Gospel (special grace) may yet be saved according to their use of common grace. Limborch is consistent with his principles. Since special grace is primarily additional revelation, it is only just that God should judge a man according to the amount of revelation he has available to him. Limborch is willing to leave the issue alone since God has revealed no answer to it.³⁶⁷ Yet, he does express his opinion that if a man lives in accordance with the right use of common grace to the best of his ability, then God will regard this as acceptable if he is ignorant of any special grace. Indeed, if he had known

³⁶³ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, iii, 6.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., IV, xi, 10: Gratia illa communis homines quide exstimulare potuit, ad generalia illa religionis officia Deo exhibendum, atque ita pro ratione status sui in quo sunt Deo placendum; non vero ut per eam obtineant vitam aeternam: Salutaria quippe illa opera, per quae homo vitam aeternam consequitur, qualia nunc in Euangelio exiguntur, fides nimirum in Jesum Christum, & conversio quae ex fide praestari debet, produci nequeunt, nisi per gratiam Dei in Euangelio revelatam & oblatam.

³⁶⁵ Limborch, in *Acosta*, p. 113.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

³⁶⁷ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, iv, 11.

the special revelation, then he would have responded immediately as did Cornelius.³⁶⁸ Limborch expresses himself most clearly in the following communication with John Locke:³⁶⁹

If this is stated I think that it can be explained on what ground, the principles stated above being preserved intact, those who have heard nothing of Christ, not even by hearsay, can be saved by Christ: {it is} surely because God attaches the grace obtained by Christ to those who (as this author says on p. 292) by the instinct of the light of nature fly for succor to his grace and mercy, and repent of [their] misdeeds, and humbly ask pardon for them; and grants them for Christ's sake the remission of sins, and imputes righteousness to them; and so through the gracious imputation of God, Who can spread His favors and benefits more widely than the words of the promises prescribe, those without direct belief in Christ, who has not been preached to them, may attain the benefit which, where Christ has been preached, cannot be obtained except through direct belief in him so that the salvation of all men is thus founded on the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

The fundamental point, then, is that God judges a man according to the amount of available revelation he has at his disposal. The unregenerate man who is ignorant of any special revelation is responsible for "faith" in God according to the principles of natural revelation, but he is not responsible for "faith" in Christ which requires the special revelation of the Gospel. The faith of the unregenerate man is unassisted by either direct or indirect supernatural help other than common grace itself. Thus, the only help the unregenerate man needs is additional revelation about Jesus so that he may come to a saving faith in him. This is the role of special grace.

Special Grace

Special grace refers to that saving work of God which produces faith and repentance in Christ. It is the purpose of this section to understand the origin, nature and mode of this work of grace. While common grace gives man the docility to choose the good and reject the evil, special grace is necessary for faith in Christ. It gives man the ability to believe in Jesus as savior since it provides him with the appropriate revelation. Special grace is that which was won for man by the cross, and by which he is able to believe.³⁷⁰ It is curious to find Limborch speaking of man obtaining an additional ability by means of special grace, i.e., the ability to believe in Christ. This ability is not due to some direct work of the Spirit which restores man's lost capacity, but rather refers to the

³⁶⁸ Ibid., IV, xi, 11. Cf. also *De Veritates Religionis*, pp. 190-192.

³⁶⁹ Limborch to Locke, March 16, 1697 in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 2222. In this letter Limborch comments on Locke's recent book entitled *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695 edition). Limborch so approved of the work that he could write that "it commands my assent so thoroughly that those things of which I have taken notice are inconsiderable and not at all detrimental to its main object." In *Theologia Christiana*, V, iii, 1, Limborch argues that Heb 11:6 requires faith in God and not in Jesus Christ. One may have this faith by the light of nature without special revelation or the saving knowledge of Christ.

³⁷⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, iii, 5.

addition of further revelation which convinces the intellect of the person and work of Christ, and moves the will to obedience. Limborch gives this definition of special grace:³⁷¹

That gracious act of God by which he calls men destitute of knowledge of him and sinners who are deserving of eternal death through the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ to faith and repentance in order that he might, if they obey this call, make them partakers of eternal salvation.

God as the Primary Cause

Limborch describes God as the "primary cause" (*causa primaria*) of man's faith and repentance.³⁷² This action of God is a "cause" in the sense that it is necessary for salvation. He attributes the whole of salvation to the working of special grace, and summarizes his viewpoint in this manner:³⁷³

We conclude, therefore, that the divine grace revealed to us through the gospel is the beginning, progression and completion of all saving good without the cooperation of which we cannot think, much less perform, any good which saves.

It is apparent that Limborch claims that the substructure of his theology is grace itself. He maintains that "there is no surpassing power in man which is from himself or his own natural strength that is able to attain a saving conversion or spiritual life."³⁷⁴ Grace is always necessary to the performance of any spiritual good. It cannot simply arise from man alone.³⁷⁵

It is in this context that Limborch speaks of the prevenient grace of God. He habitually refers to the "prevenient and operating grace" (*praeveniens & operans gratia*) which is necessary for faith and repentance.³⁷⁶ The purpose of this gracious action is to "dispose and prepare men in such a way that they may come to Christ whenever the gospel is preached to them."³⁷⁷ God performs this gracious action through the call of the Gospel. Upon hearing the Gospel, men are disposed and prepared to believe and repent.

³⁷¹ Ibid., IV, xi, 1: quod sit gratiosa Dei actio, qua homines sui cognitione destitutos & peccatores, ideoque mortem aeternam commeritos, per Euangelium Filii sui Jesu Christi ad fidem & resipiscentiam vocat, eo fine, ut si vocationi isti pareant salutis aeternae eos faciat participes.

³⁷² Ibid., V, xi, 1; xvi, 1.

³⁷³ Ibid., IV, xi, 15: Concludimus itaque, quod gratia divina per Euangelium nobis revelata, sit principium, progressus, & complementum omnis salutaris boni, sine eius cooperatione nullum salutare bonum ne cogitare quidem, multo minus perficere, possimus.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., IV, xiv, 4: Fatemur libentes, nullam in homine superesse potentiam, qua ex sese & viribus suis naturalibus ad conversionem salutarem, aut vitam spiritualem, pervenire possit.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., IV, xi, 12-14.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., V, xi, 4.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., IV, xiv, 18: Idem est quod datio, vers. 37. {John 6}, Quicquid dat mihi Pater ad me veniet: est nimirum tractio cum effectu, seu actio Dei, qua homines ita flectu ac preeparat, ut ad Christum, quando Euangelium ipsis praedicatur, veniant.

This is what Limborch calls the "assistance of divine grace."³⁷⁸ In his commentary on Romans 3:25, he gives this summary statement of prevenient grace:³⁷⁹

For works which are exhibited from faith are not done by man on his own accord and personal movement, but preceded by divine grace and consequently to the degree that they are exhibitions of faith, they are not our works; they are produced in us by the magnitude of God's own promises and that excellent operation of the Holy Spirit.

According to Limborch, this prevenient grace of God is both sufficient and efficacious. This distinction is merely a conceptual one. He contends that they are of one and the same species, and are only distinguished because of their relations to us.³⁸⁰ In the divine perspective, the call of God is at the same time both sufficient and efficacious. In the human perspective, the divine call may be sufficient, but not efficacious. It is on this account that the distinction is made. But the reason for the distinction is the fault of man who though he may have sufficient grace from God to obey, nevertheless wills to remain in rebellion to God. Consequently, the grace of God was not efficacious in that instance. The defect, however, was not in God's call, but in man's response.

Limborch maintains that God gives all men sufficient grace to come to faith. Since God has entered into a covenant with man, to which he has attached both rewards and punishments, God, in his justice, is "obligated to bestow the grace by which the actual conversion of men is possible."³⁸¹ In the extension of this grace, God confers upon man the ability or strength (*vires*) to obey the commandments of God.³⁸² Thus, God's gracious call is sufficient because it is "capable of producing the effect," but it is only efficacious when it actually produces the effect.³⁸³ The efficacy of the call depends, in part, on the cooperation of the human will and intellect. It is within this perspective that Limborch can speak of the divine gift of faith and repentance. It is a divine gift because God has given man the ability to believe and repent "which is all that is required on his [God's] part."³⁸⁴ It is man's action which renders the call efficacious.

God always provides sufficient power to render the call efficacious. If the call is ineffectual, the fault does not lie with God, but with the human subject. It is ineffectual "by the voluntary and avoidable wickedness of man who does not use the strength which

³⁷⁸ Limborch, *Acosta*, p. 124; cf. *Theologia Christiana*, V, xi, 1.

³⁷⁹ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Rom. 3:25: Opera enim, quae ex fide praestantur, non facit homo sponte ac proprio motu, sed gratia divina praeventus & quae ita ex fide praestantur non tam sunt opera nostra, quam Dei promissum suorum magnitudine, & Spiritus Sancti per illa operantis virtute, ea in nobis producentis.

³⁸⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, xii, 6: Nos autem contendimus, unam eandemque specie esse vocationem, quae ratione respectus diversi distinguitur.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, IV, xii, 7: etiam ex justitia se obligavit ad conferendum gratiam, qua homines actu converti possunt.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, IV, xii, 8.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, IV, xii, 8: Eadem ergo gratia diverso respectu vacatur Sufficiens & Efficax: Sufficiens, quia vim habet producendi effectum: Efficax, quia iam effectuum suum produxit.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, xiv, 15: ...dat nempe Deus quippiam, quando omnia confert, quae a parte sua requiruntur, ut homo quod Deus ipsi offert consequatur: quando itaque Deus potentiam credendi & resipiscendi confert; recte fidem & resipiscentiam dare dicitur: quando homo viribus a Deo concessis recte utitur, datio est cum effectum

God has granted him."³⁸⁵ Thus, in order for grace to be efficacious it must have the cooperation of man. This is precisely how Limborch defines efficacious grace when he writes that it "is that voluntary cooperation of man which obtains its effect."³⁸⁶ Salvation, then, depends partly upon man. While God's call proceeds from him efficaciously (i.e., sufficient power to render the effect), it is not efficaciously applied in man until he renders it effectual by the cooperation of his free will. The power flows from God, but it is one which cooperates with man's free will.³⁸⁷ Limborch maintains the essential nature of human cooperation and consent while his Contra-Remonstrant opponents view the applied efficacy as deriving solely from God.

The Mode of the Operation of Grace³⁸⁸

In Limborch, it is the nature of faith and repentance which defines both the nature and mode of the operation of grace. Faith and repentance belong to the genus of free actions which are required of men. Limborch distinguishes three kinds of divine gifts: (1) those which God bestows "absolutely on men without any interceding operation of man," i.e., creation, providence, etc.; (2) those which are given "but which are not contingent upon man except his labor and industry intercede," i.e., tilling the soil, etc. and (3) those which are commandments from God who provides sufficient strength "but requires the free obedience of men." Faith and repentance belong to this last class.³⁸⁹

Foundational to Limborch's concept is that faith and repentance are both divine gifts and human actions. Faith is a human act which is assisted by divine grace. He constantly emphasizes this as is illustrated by this statement:³⁹⁰

Consequently, faith is not such a gift of God that is effected in us without us, nor a habit infused in us by God, but an act of our obedience which is elicited from our will by the preventing and accompanying divine grace.

As a human act, faith involves both the intellect and the will. There are, however, two impediments to man's conversion: "the blindness of the understanding and the perverseness of the will." It is not enough to remove the blindness of the intellect (which Limborch equates with ignorance), but "at the same time a power must be granted

³⁸⁵ Ibid., IV, xii, 8: Si autem ea inefficax sit, id fit per voluntariam & evitabilem hominis malitiam, qui viribus sibi a Deo concessis non utitur.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., IV, xii, 8: Efficax est, quae cooperante voluntate hominis effectum fortitur...

³⁸⁷ Ibid., IV, xii, 8: Ex parte effectus, quando voluntas illi cooperatur. Itaque Sufficiens vocatio, quando per cooperationem liberi arbitrii fortitur suum effectum, vocatur Efficax.

³⁸⁸ Limborch devotes a whole section to this question in his *De Veritatis Religionis*, pp. 242-248.

³⁸⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, xi, 1: Alia a Deo absolute hominibus dantur, nulla intercedente operatione hominis....Alia dantur quidem a Deo, sed homini non contingunt, nisi labore eius ac industria intercedente...Alia praecipuntur a Deo & ad ea praestanda sufficientes a Deo vires donantur; sed requiritur libera hominis obedientia, qua Deo praecipienti, virium a Deo concessarum auxilio, mortem gerit, atque ita donum sibi a Deo oblatum consequitur. Et ex eorum genere est Fides & Resipientia.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., V, xi, 2: Non itaque fides eiusmodi Dei donum est, quod in nobis sine nobis efficitur, neque habitus a Deo nobis infusus, sed obedientiae nostrae actus, a voluntate nostra, per gratiam divinam prevenientem & concomitantem excitata, elicitus.

capable of reorienting the perverseness of the will."³⁹¹ The role of prevenient grace is not only to instruct the intellect, but also to move the will. Therefore, Limborch argues that without this grace, man does not have the ability to believe. He states that natural man "is not capable of faith" except that God as "first cause" move him to faith.³⁹² It is the role of grace to confer upon man the ability to believe and obey. Limborch summarizes his point in this manner:³⁹³

Therefore, we say that faith is in the first instance indeed an act of our will, not operating only by its own natural faculty, but excited by the preventing and accompanying divine grace, and rendered capable of believing.

Nevertheless, faith is, at its root, an human act. According to Limborch, faith involves three constituents: knowledge of the divine will, a judgment concerning the reasons for faith, and an assent to the judgment. The first two are actions of the intellect, but the latter is an act of the will.³⁹⁴ Divine grace instructs the intellect, God's gift of docility enables the intellect to judge, and the prevenient and accompanying grace of God excites the will. Yet at every point it is the man who receives the instruction, who judges it, and then either decides to assent or not assent to the judgment of the intellect.

The key issue concerning the mode of the operation of grace is this action of the will. Limborch maintains that the will must always remain free. There can be no irresistible action on the part of divine grace. For Limborch, the issue is not whether or not there is such a thing as prevenient grace, but the issue is the mode of that grace.³⁹⁵

Neither do we say that man is able to shake off the dominion of sin of himself, but divine grace is required which goes before it and bestows strength to subdue sin. The question concerns only the mode by which divine grace operates in man for the subduing of sin.

Concerning Philippians 2:12 where it is affirmed that God wills and works in men to perform his purposes, Limborch concedes that this is true, and argues that the dispute does not concern the fact of God's work, but "only the mode of the divine working."³⁹⁶

The proper mode of grace's operation is that which retains the ability of man to disbelieve. It is not an irresistible grace. Limborch poses the question in this form: "Is it

³⁹¹ Ibid., IV, xiii, 5: duo enim obedientiam mandoatorum divinatorum impediunt, intellectus coecitas, & malitia voluntatis: sublatio coecitatis intellectus, seu ignorantiae, sufficiens ad obedientiam producendum remedium non est, nisi simul potentia conseratur ad voluntatis malitiam tollendum idonea.

³⁹² Ibid., V, xi, 6: In naturali hominis potestate fides non est, utpote cuius prima causa Deus est, sin cuius auxilio homo ad eam plane ineptus est.

³⁹³ Ibid., V, xi, 6: Dicimus itaque fidem in primo suo instanti esse actum & quidem voluntatis nostrae; non facultate sua naturali sola operantis, sed per gratiam divinam praevenientem & concomitantem excitatae, & ad credendum idoneae redditae.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., V, xi, 6.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., IV, xiv, 8: Nec nos dicimus, hominem ex seipso peccati dominium posse excutere, sed requiri gratiam divinam, quae ipsum praeveniat, & vires ad peccatum debellandum largiatur: quaestio solummodo est de modo, quo gratia divina ad peccatum debellandum in homine operetur.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., IV, xiv, 19: Non dicitur Deus efficacio insuperabili velle & perficere operari: sed sulomodo operari: atqui nos hoc ultro concedimus, disputamus solummodo de modo operationis divinae.

possible for man not to believe and not to be converted when God seriously wills that he believe and be converted?"³⁹⁷ Limborch, of course, answers in the affirmative. He presents a series of arguments to ground his answer. First, he cites several examples in Scripture where God willed the conversion of men who, through their own rebellion, were not converted (Isa 5:4; Ezek 12:2; Matt 11:21-23; 23:37,38; Luke 7:30; John 5:34; Acts 7:51; Isa 65:2,3).³⁹⁸ Second, the fact that God attaches certain promises to his command to believe and repent indicates that the grace of God is not irresistible since it would be unjust to reward or punish a man for action in which he had no choice.³⁹⁹ Third, the ordinary means by which God brings men to faith and repentance is the Word of God and it does not act irresistibly.⁴⁰⁰ Fourth, Limborch maintains that the Contra-Remonstrant position reduces to an absurdity in that it encourages "carnal security" (*securitatem carnalem*) because the sinner sees no need to take any initiative to repent since he must wait for God's irresistible action.⁴⁰¹

The underlying presupposition of all of these arguments is the freedom of man's will. Men do reject God's will that they be converted, God uses his Word in a manner that is resistible, and God offers man rewards for obedience and threatens him with punishment for disobedience. Any operation of grace which destroys this freedom of the will is to be rejected. Commenting on Acts 7:51, he argues that in conversion the Holy Spirit works in such a way which is consistent with free will. The Spirit does not work omnipotently and insuperably in human conversion since, as is fitting for rational creatures, "he does not destroy free obedience."⁴⁰² The Spirit works through a moral influence which excites the will to moral actions, that is, free and voluntary actions.⁴⁰³ By definition, then, the work of the Spirit is resistible. The Holy Spirit may only operate upon the human will in such a way that does not undermine the essence of man's freedom. It belongs to the property of freedom that at any point man may do other than what he did.⁴⁰⁴ Consequently, at any point in the gracious operations of the Spirit, a man may either consent or reject such operations.

Therefore, conversion is not wholly of God, but depends in part upon human response. It is the "absolute liberty of man" to reject God's grace since all men possess

³⁹⁷ Ibid., IV, xiii, 1: An cum Deus hominem converti & credere serio vult, homo possit non credere, & non converti.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., IV, xiii, 2-15.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., IV, xiii, 16-19.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., IV, xiii, 20-27. This will be discussed further in the next section under the nature of grace's operation, see pages 167-176.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., IV, xiii, 28,29.

⁴⁰² Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Acts 7:51: Non quod ullus homo omnipotent; Spiritus Sancti operanti resistere possit; sed illi, qua Spiritus Sancti in conversione hominis utitur; cui cum homo saepires resistat, & hi Judaei resiterent, liquet inde Spiritum Sanctum omnipotent ac insuperabili operatione non efficere in hominibus conversionem; sed tali, quae creaturae rationali est conveniens, & liberam obedientiam non destruit, hoc est, cui moralis movendi vis inest.

⁴⁰³ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, iii, 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., IV, vi, 2-4 where he argues that if it is not in man's power to avoid sin, then he sins necessarily. If man cannot do other than what he does, then what he does is determined. There is no freedom in this context.

"sufficient liberty which is able to reject the divine call."⁴⁰⁵ Thus, while the prevenient work of God is the origin of the strength by which man responds, man's part is to freely consent to the excitements of divine grace.⁴⁰⁶ God is not cause of conversion.⁴⁰⁷ Man may freely reject the overtures of divine grace through his persistent wickedness and infidelity.

It must be remembered that the ability of man to believe, that is, cooperate with divine grace, is received by a prevenient work of the Spirit. If it were not for the prevenient work of the Spirit, it would be impossible for man to cooperate with the grace of God.⁴⁰⁸ Limborch regards all the language and figures of man's inability to overcome the dominion of sin such as "blindness, death, darkness, slavery, etc." as "figurative expressions" (*locutiones figuratas*). They represent an inability on the part of man's natural strength to conquer sin, but, according to Limborch, this does not imply that an irresistible influence is necessary for rendering man able to overcome sin. He argues that since these conditions were incurred by their own free will through persistent wickedness, it does not require an irresistible action to reverse the conditions. Whatever is contracted by free will can be removed by free will. Yet, since man has degenerated to such an extent that he cannot release himself from his condition, God must act first.⁴⁰⁹ The nature of this grace is the subject of the next major section of this chapter. At this point, it can be said that God provides sufficient grace to all who hear the Gospel. The reason why that some who hears the Gospel is not converted is their own persistent wickedness.⁴¹⁰

The Nature of the Operation of Special Grace

While Limborch continually insists that the only difference between himself and the Contra-Remonstrants is the operational mode of special grace, there is another fundamental difference between them. It is here that Limborch not only differs with the Contra-Remonstrants, but with Arminius as well. Since Limborch insists upon the fact of God's prevenient grace which enables a man to believe the Gospel message, and the resistibility of this grace, it is important to inquire into the nature of this gracious operation. The question may be focused in this way: what kind of assistance does God provide man through the Holy Spirit for his conversion?

Limborch's inviolatable principle is that God cannot act in such a way which hinders or destroys man's ultimate free dom. Thus, in providing assistance to man, it

⁴⁰⁵ Limborch, *De Veritatis Religionis*, p. 245: Venisset autem frustra, si nulli credidissent: & potuissent nulli credere, si omnes suiffent liberi ut vocationi divinae potuissent resistere.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 244: A Deo itaque primum operandi principium est, quatenus homini vires ad operandum necessarias largitur, & viribus iam concessis hominem movet & instigat ad operandum: Sed a parte hominis accedere debet voluntatis, gratia divina excitatae, liber consensus.

⁴⁰⁷ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, xiv, 21: Dices. Ergo gratiae non est primaria causa salutis. Resp. Non est solitaria; sed tamen primaria.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., IV, xiv, 21: ipsa enim liberi arbitrii cooperation est a gratia tanquam primaria causa: nisi enim a praeveniente gratia liberum arbitrium excitatum esset, gratiae cooperari non posset.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., IV, xiv, 3-10. This personal degeneration is an indirect result of the loss of the original *integritas*.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., IV, xiii, 5.

cannot in any way undermine man's ability of free choice. This limits God to certain kinds of actions which are suitable to free will. It is in this connection that Limborch emphasizes the role of threats, promises, punishments and rewards which do not violate man's freedom.⁴¹¹ These admonitions are intended to persuade and motivate.

Limborch maintains that it is God's prevenient grace, through cooperation with the free will of man, that enables a man to cast off the dominion of sin. Interestingly, for this Remonstrant theologian this is a work which belongs to the prophetic office of Christ. It is specifically carried out through the announcement of the Gospel, and its effect is to free men from the "slavery of sin." Limborch presents four means by which this is accomplished: (1) through the preaching of holy doctrine; (2) through the confirmation of this doctrine through miracles; (3) by the offering of himself as an example; and (4) as the federal victim who ratified the new covenant.⁴¹² In a similar section, where he is emphasizing that the natural man of himself cannot free himself from sin's power, he argues that God gave man certain "signs of his grace" in order to induce him to love justice and hate sin. In this way, he demonstrated that he was just in punishing sin and rewarding those who seek him.⁴¹³ These signs came in the form of general admonitions and commands, promises and threats, and famous examples of righteous living. However, in this particular section of *Theologia Christiana*, Limborch is discussing the situation before the Abrahamic Covenant. This is important because throughout every period of God's covenantal relationship with man, God deals with man in the same manner, that is, through the promise of reward and the threat of punishment. The prophetic ministry of Christ is better only because it offers better promises and more decisive threats. The difference between the new covenant and the old ones is one of degree, not of kind. The commands, promises and examples of the new covenant are better than that of the old covenants.

Limborch's perspective here may be best summarized by saying that God deals with man covenantally, and this is given to man by his revealed Word. The prophetic work of Christ consists in the revelation, practice and ratification of the Gospel. The Gospel is the ordinary means for producing faith and repentance in man.⁴¹⁴ In the context of disputing whether or not special grace is irresistible, he writes:⁴¹⁵

⁴¹¹ Ibid., IV, v, 4; vi; xiii, 16.

⁴¹² Ibid., III, xvi.

⁴¹³ Ibid., III, vi, 3: Deus itaque iam ab initio aliqua gratiae suae indicia inter homines exstare voluit, ut ita amorem justi ac recti incenderet, odiumque peccati induceret; seque peccatorum vindicem, remuneratoremque se quaerentium, partim monitis quibusdam generalibus ac praeceptis, partim promissis ac minis, partim illustribus quibusdam exemplis, demonstravit.

⁴¹⁴ It is "ordinary" in the sense that God may through means other than the Gospel (i.e., through the "light of reason") bring about faith in men as is the case with those who have never heard the Gospel message. Cf. Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, xiii, 20: Licet enim gentes Eugangelii luce destitutae, non omni honeste vivendi regula careant, medio tamen quo immediate ad salutem perducantur destitutae sint. Et licet Deus forte aliquando extra ordinem operetur, de quo disputare nolumus, ordinarium tamen conversionis medium est verbum Euangelii, vel ore prolatum, vel scripto traditum. In actuality, then, the Gospel is the only means except for those who never have any opportunity to hear. They are the only exceptions.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., IV, xiii, 20: Verbum Euangelii medium est ordinarium, a Deo nempe ordinatum, per quod homines ad fidem & conversionem adducere intendit...Dicimus ergo primo, Verbum esse medium

The word of the gospel is the ordinary means appointed by God by which he intended to persuade men to faith and repentance... We say first, therefore, the word is the ordinary means by which God converts men. At one time, of course, the law of Moses was the ordinary means of conversion to the people of Israel. Now, however, from the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, that gospel is the ordinary means.

The medium of the Gospel is suitable to the freedom of man since it is possible for the man to evaluate the message with his intellect and then decide whether he will assent to it or not. Limborch explains that the message of the Gospel is intelligible and is accommodated to the human intellect. Since the "actions of the intellect are necessary," man is able to make a rational determination through examination of the evidence. It is then left to the free will of man to assent or reject the determination of the intellect.⁴¹⁶

Through the Gospel, therefore, God intends to convince the intellect and move the will of man. He does this by supplying in the Word the reasons for faith which convince the intellect, and supplying promises and threats which motivate the will. In this sense, the Word is God's "instrument" for producing faith. Limborch explains his meaning in this paragraph:⁴¹⁷

The instrument by which God works faith in us is the word of God, whether spoken orally, or written and read by men; to which God always wills his attending Spirit present, to whom belongs the beginning of spiritual strength... This word not only demands faith, but also contains within it various reasons and signs by which it is possible for man to be certain of that divinity. These signs and arguments are not only the

ordinarium per quod Deus homines convertat; olim quidem Lex Mosis populo Israelis ordinarium conversionis medium suit; nunc autem ab apparitione Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Euangelium medium illud ordinarium est.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., IV, xiii, 21: Ubi homo verbum audivit, non potest quidem quin intelligat illius sensum, praesertim clare ac perspicue expositum, hominisque intellectui accommodatum; actiones enim intellectus necessariae sunt, & pro objecti intelligendi applicatione in nobis existunt. At vero in potestate hominis est verbum illud quod audivit, cuiusque sensum intelligit, meditari rationum quibus eius veritas ac divinitas adstruitur pondus attentius inquirere, verbi naturam exactius examinare.... Postquam homo verbum audivit & diligenter meditatus est, potest per gratiam Dei illud recipere, vel per liberam contumaciam istud rejicere. Quod ex variis liquet.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., V, xi, 7: Instrumentum quo Deus fidem in nobis operatur est verbum Dei, sive ore traditum, sive scriptum & ab homine lectum; quod Deus semper Spiritu suo comitatum esse vult, seu, cui virtus spiritualis inest... Verbum hoc non tantum fidem exigit: sed & in se varias continet rationes ac signa, quibus homo de illius divinitate certus esse possit. Signa haec & argumenta sunt non tantum doctrinae sanctitas, & promissorum excellentia, sed & omnis generis miracula, quibus doctrina confirmata est, aliaque plura, quae susius ad Scripturae Sacrae divinitatem adstruendum deducta sunt. Quae licet ab hominibus praesertis, & nullis nisi Mathematicis demonstrationibus acquiescere volentibus, assensum non extorqueant; tamen hominibus animi docilitate ac probitate praeditis, aut a probitate non alienis, convincendis, abunde sufficiunt. The same is also true for repentance, V, xvi, 1, 2: Instrumentum quo Deus utitur ad resipiscentiam in nobis efficiendum est verbum ipsius, Spiritus Sancti efficacia semper comitatum, ac virtute spirituali instructum est enim verbum Euangelii ministerium spiritus... Verbum autem Dei varia continet argumenta, quibus ad resipiscentiam moveamur.

holiness of doctrine, and excellent promises, but also all kinds of miracles which confirm doctrine, and many other things which lead to the establishment of the divine authority of Holy Scripture.

The Gospel, therefore, contains all that is sufficient for the conviction of the intellect and the motivation of the will. However, the Word does not work in such a way that overpowers the will. On the contrary, it is necessary that a man have a certain "docility" before faith can be produced in him.⁴¹⁸

Yet, Limborch constantly insists that the Holy Spirit must accompany (*comitare*) the Word for it to be effective. The Spirit and the Word are consistently conjoined in the work of conversion and regeneration. Regeneration is a work of God effected by "his word and Spirit."⁴¹⁹ Therefore, Limborch does not believe that the Word works alone. On the contrary, wherever the Word is preached or read, the Holy Spirit is always (*semper*) present.⁴²⁰

It is important to examine the nature of this relationship between the Spirit and Word. Limborch does draw the traditional distinction between the internal and external calls of the Gospel. The internal call is defined as the work of the Spirit in "influencing the hearts of men, moving, exciting and stirring them to obey the external call made through the word."⁴²¹ The external call is the actual preaching of the Gospel itself which is received outwardly. While Limborch draws this conceptual distinction, he does not regard the internal and external calls as two separate things. Instead, one always involves the other. He summarizes his position in this way:⁴²²

However, this internal call is not a power of the Spirit operating separately from the word, but through the word, and always in it to such a degree that it is, in fact, one and the same call, but termed external and internal in two respects. For since the Spirit never operates apart from the word, neither is the word destitute of the Spirit, this is given to those who are called by the word and Spirit as much as is sufficient for conversion and faith.

It is clear from this statement that this Remonstrant theologian limits the work of the Spirit in conversion to the instrumentality of the Word while at the same time attributing all of the efficacy of the Word to the presence of the Spirit. The two are so intertwined

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., V, xi, 9: Hinc iam manifestum est, Deum verbi sui instrumento non ita in nobis fidem operari, quin a parte hominis requiratur pia docilitas, ut operatio verbi effectum fortiatur.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., VI, iii, 17: Ratione regenerationis quam Deus per verbum & spiritum suum in nobis operatur, per quam Deo similes sumus, eiusque, non aliter ac filius patris, indolem referimus. Cf. also III, xxi, 7: ...promittit homines peccatores se ad Deum conversuros, seque id per verbum & spiritum suum effecturum...

⁴²⁰ Ibid., V, xi, 7: Instrumentum quo Deus fidem in nobis operatur est verbum Dei, sive ore traditum, sive scriptum & ab homine lectum; quod Deus semper Spiritu suo comitatum esse vult, seu, cui virtus spiritualis inest...

⁴²¹ Ibid., IV, xii, 2: Interna vocation est, quae sit per Spiritum Dei, qui in corda hominum influens, ea movet, excitat & exstimulat, ut vocationi externa per verbum factae obtemperent.

⁴²² Ibid., IV, xii, 2: Haec autem interna vocatio non est virtus Spiritus seorsim operans a verbo, sed per verbum, & verbo semper inest: adeo ut revera una eademque sit vocatio, sed quae secundum diversos respectus vocetur externa & interna: Quia enim spiritus nunquam operatur absque verbo, neque verbum unquam destitutum est spiritu, hinc qui verbo vocantur, etiam spiritu, quantum ad conversionem & fidem sufficit, donantur.

that one cannot separate them in their work of conversion. According to Limborch, "the external call is not a distinct species from the internal call."⁴²³ Just as the external call alone is not sufficient for conversion, neither is it possible for the Spirit to work independent of the Word. The reason for this impossibility is rooted in the nature of conversion itself: it is a moral action accomplished by faith (which involves the consent of the will). The Spirit must work through the Word since the Word is a moral influence.⁴²⁴

This moral work of the Spirit is illustrated by Limborch's concept of regeneration. While refuting the Contra-Remonstrant dogma of irresistible grace, he argues that:⁴²⁵

We add now that regeneration is ascribed to the word of God in which there is no irresistible power because *he begat us by the word of truth* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:3). That is, God, by the resurrection of Christ confirmed that the whole of the doctrine of Jesus Christ is divine, and rendered us certain of our resurrection to eternal life if we follow in the steps of our Master Jesus Christ. Consequently, our faith in the resurrection of Christ powerfully stimulates us to piety, and regenerates us that we might participate in that happy resurrection...Now this whole operation is not natural, but it is a moral action which can be resisted by man so that in order to have its effect, it is required that the mind not be stubborn.

Regeneration involves a moral change, not a metaphysical one. Consequently, since it is moral rather than natural, it is not only a change that can be resisted but also requires a special predisposition on the part of man. If one will be convinced by the arguments of Scripture and be motivated by the example of Christ's love, then regeneration is effectual.

In summary it may be said that Limborch's concept of the Spirit is radically different from both the Contra-Remonstrants and Arminius. According to Limborch, the Spirit and the Word are always present together, and never separate from each other. The Spirit and the Word in the work of conversion are not distinct operations, but one and the same operation. The Spirit, therefore, does not work directly upon the hearts of men, but instructs and motivates them by the Word which he has revealed. When the Word convicts the intellect and motivates the will, the Spirit is said to have worked in and through the Word. When the will refuses to assent to the Word, the will has also resisted the work of the Spirit. This understanding is evidenced by Limborch's comment on Acts 7:51:⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Ibid., IV, xii, 3: Externa non est specie distincta ab interna.

⁴²⁴ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Acts 16:14.

⁴²⁵ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, xiv, 14: Addimus nunc; quod regeneratio adscribitur verbo Dei, cui irresistibilis illa vis non inest: verbo enim veritatis nos genuit, Jacob, I.18 & I Pet. I.3. resurrectioni Jesu Chrsiti ex mortuius: quatenus Deus per resurrectionem Christi integram Jesu Chrsiti doctrinam ut divinam confirmavit, ac speciatim nos de nostra resurrectione ad vitam aeternam, si vestigiis Jesu Christi ducis nostri insistamus, certos reddit: ac proinde fides de resurrectione Jesu Chrsiti nos ad pietatem potenter exstimulat, ac regenerat, ut ita beatae resurrectionis participes simus...Atqui omnis haec operatio non physica, sed moralis actio est, cui resisti ab homine potest, quaeque ut effectum habeat requirit animum minime refractarium.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., IV, xiii, 14: Non dicuntur verbo resistere, sed Spiritus Sancto. Atqui secundum ipsos actio Spiritus Sancti distinsa est a verbo: ergo aut actioni illi Spiritus Sancti restiterunt; aut fatendum

They are not said to resist the word, but the Holy Spirit. Now, according to them, the action of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Word. Therefore, either they resisted that action of the Holy Spirit, or it must be admitted with us that the action of the Holy Spirit which intends to regenerate men is always conjoined with the Word, and consequently, whoever resists the Word, also resists the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the action of the Spirit in conversion is limited to the external call through the Gospel. This is a practical equation of the Word and Spirit in the work of conversion. The Spirit excites, motivates and stimulates men through the Word by virtue of the arguments, examples, commands, promises and threats made in the Word. Dorner is correct when he argues that in Remonstrant theology "regeneration becomes the incitement of the moral powers by precept and example," and the operation of the Holy Spirit, though admitted to be necessary, does not exist in the sense of "dwelling, operating and creating in man."⁴²⁷ Fundamentally, then, the work of the Spirit is neither direct nor personal, but is mediated by the Gospel.

Conclusion

Limborch maintains that grace is necessary for man's faith and obedience. It is necessary to reveal to man what is proper of moral action (so that the intellect may operate) and to incline the will toward good rather than evil. In this way, man may again possess *integritas* which he lost in the fall. Grace does not restore freedom to the will, but strengthens the free will which remains. Grace does not remove any original guilt, but ultimately reverses the *mala* which Adam's sin introduced into the world. Grace, therefore, is only necessary to assist man's fallen capabilities so that he is able to regain the integrity of Adam. Fallen man is not substantially different from created man. The only differences are ones of degree, not kind. Man is weakened in his capabilities (the will has a propensity to evil, the intellect has lost its "natural guidance" system), but they are still intact and potent. Consequently, grace simply works with those capabilities which remain. God grants sufficient revelation so that man's intellect may discern the principles he once possessed in himself, and God provides sufficient motivation for the will of man which counter-balances the propensities of the flesh. Knowledge and motivation are provided by the revelation, promises and threats of the Gospel. Man, then, regains the *integritas* which was lost in Adam through an informed intellect and a motivated will.

The nature of grace is directly proportionate to man's need for grace: grace fills the need which man has. Therefore, the relationship between the need and the nature of grace is intimate. The nature of grace must conform to man's psychology and his fallen condition. It must help man out of his fallen condition without violating his psychological structure. Limborch, therefore, excludes any grace which does not work through or within man's psychological makeup. Within this framework Limborch denies both irresistible grace (since it violates man's free will) and direct or personal grace (since it violates man's epistemological foundations). This is true because it is the understanding

nobiscum, Spiritus Sancti homines regenerare intendentis actionem semper cum verbo conjunctam esse, ac proinde ipsos cum verbo resisterent, etiam Spiritui Sancto restitisse.

⁴²⁷ J.A. Dorner, *A History of Protestant Theology*, 1:421.

which informs and moves the will, and the intellect only knows and understands what it receives through the five senses.⁴²⁸ Consequently, only empirical data can inform the understanding which, in turn, moves the will. This excludes the direct work of the Spirit since it is not empirical. The Spirit of grace cannot, therefore, work irresistibly or directly. The nature of God's grace must conform to man's psychological makeup which receives and evaluates only empirical data.

It is significant that Limborch's *Theologia Christiana* does not have a section which is devoted specifically to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is only in connection with specific dogmas or in rebuttal to Contra-Remonstrant theories that he speaks of the Spirit. Consequently, it is difficult to understand his particular view of the work of the Spirit. Yet, the fact that he devotes no special attention to his work indicates he has subsumed the Spirit's role under the role of another agent. This is exactly the case when he speaks of the relationship between the Word and the Spirit. The Spirit assists the Word. The Word is the instrument of the Spirit. The Spirit assists through the medium of the Word. It is, then, the Word which convinces the intellect by its rational basis and moves the will by its promises and threats. The Spirit is limited to this mode of operation. Limborch's epistemology leads him to this conclusion. Since man is born with a *tabula rasa*, and his intellect is informed and his will is moved by sense experience, the work of the Spirit is confined to this mode of operation as well. The action of the Spirit is a moral one which is inherent in the action of the Word itself. The act of the Spirit is not a distinct act from the action of the Word. Rather, the movement of the Spirit through the Word is simply the mind's apprehension of the commands, promises and threats of the Gospel which man receives empirically. Consequently, Limborch nowhere speaks of the direct or personal operation of the Spirit. The Word informs the understanding, and the will is free to assent to the understanding. The Spirit does not move the will directly, but only indirectly as He reveals the Gospel which informs the intellect. The operation of the Spirit through the Word, then, is equivalent to the operation of my human spirit through the words of this page except that one can be sure that God's Words are true. The Spirit of God, according to Limborch, moves the will of man by promises and threats in exactly the same way that a revival preacher would attempt to move his audience through the external call of the Gospel.

⁴²⁸ Limborch is essentially a Lockean empiricist. The correspondence between Limborch and John Locke demonstrates this thesis. See in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, nos. 1034, 1409, 2222, 2742, 2881, 3010. In particular, Limborch writes Locke that he will "never blush to avow the progress I have made through you" (September 12, 1687, no. 963). Concerning Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, Limborch tells his friend that "everything pleases me wonderfully," and that his book is a "clear exposition of truth" (October 19, 1700, no. 2795).

Chapter V

The Ground of Grace in Philip van Limborch

In the previous chapter, it was seen that fallen man lacks the ability to come to saving faith of himself. God must take the initiative in providing that grace by which man believes the Gospel and repents of his sins. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore the ground upon which God reconciles himself to men. At the center of this discussion is Limborch's theory of atonement. Consequently, it will be necessary to explicate how the death of Christ functions within his system to provide a ground for God's acceptance of men into a peaceful relationship with him.

The Freedom of God

The starting point for Limborch's theory of atonement is the freedom of God's will. Fundamentally, he affirms that with respect to God's covenantal relationship with man the divine will is supreme. It is the will which decides to punish or not to punish sin; what will satisfy the penalty of sin and what will not. It is also the will which decides what the divine justice will accept as fulfilling covenantal obligations. It is the purpose of this subsection to detail Limborch's considerations, and to draw out the implications of his position.

The Will of God

As with man, Limborch divides the internal actions of God into two categories: the understanding and the will. The attribute of understanding is divided between the theoretical intellect (i.e., knowledge) and the practical intellect (wisdom). The former is that attribute by which God knows all things absolutely, and the latter is that attribute by which God directs what is known to certain ends.⁴²⁹ The function of the intellect, as in man, is necessary. God necessarily knows all things, past and future. It is impossible for God not to know a certain thing, or that he choose not to know a certain thing. God knows all things by a "simple and pure act of the intellect."⁴³⁰ In the same way, God necessarily knows the proper and best way (either by decree or permission) to attain a certain end.

However, the other internal action of God, his will, is conceptually distinct from the intellect. Limborch distinguishes between three senses which may be attached to God's will. First, there is the faculty of willing (*facultatem volendi*) which denotes the divine capacity (inherent in the divine essence) by which God immediately wills just as the human soul immediately wills and understands. Second, the act of willing (*actum volendi*) or the will itself (*volitionem ipsam*) which freely decrees one thing or another. Limborch places the eternal decrees of God in this category. Third, the content of God's

⁴²⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, II, viii, 1.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, viii, 34: *Modus scientiae divinae est perfectissimus: non enim in Deo est instar hatibus, sed actus perfectissimi; ideoque simplici intuitu omnia cognoscit per nudam & simplicem intelligentiam.*

willing (*id quod Deus vult*) consisting in precepts, promises and threats. He places God's covenantal relationship with man in this category.⁴³¹

Throughout all of these categories, the freedom of God's will is the essential quality. This freedom cannot be exercised with respect to anything contrary to his nature, that is, God by a "natural necessity" (*naturali necessitate*) wills the supreme good.⁴³² The supreme good is, of course, consistent with God's other attributes. However, in terms of the purpose of this chapter, the role of the will of God within the covenantal structure is the most important category. This will be considered in conjunction with the justice of God.

The Justice of God

Between his discussion of will of God and the justice of God, Limborch reflects on the divine "affections" (*affectiones*) such as love, anger, wrath, desire, hope and joy which function within the divine will.⁴³³ These affections are regulated (*moderor*) by the moral virtues of holiness and justice. This simply means that God expresses his affections in conformity with divine justice. While human virtue is defined as conformity to law, God's virtue is the natural and necessary expression of his divine nature.⁴³⁴ While justice and holiness regulate all the divine affections, Limborch adds that divine mercy (*mansuetudine*), which is a moral virtue, regulates divine anger (*ira*) in particular.⁴³⁵

In the context of this discussion, Limborch's application of the justice of God to the covenant structure is most important. There are several aspects to this structure. First, divine justice demands that God not require of man more than he is able to obey (or, if he does, that he give every man sufficient grace to obey). Second, divine justice demands that when man fulfills the covenant God must give man the promised rewards of the covenant, and may even give more than he promised. Third, divine justice has the right to punish violators of the covenant, if he so wills, with the punishments threatened, but he may not add to the punishments of the covenant.⁴³⁶

It is the last point which Limborch takes pains to emphasize. Indeed, it is the heart of his theory of atonement. God only punishes sins if he so wills. There is no necessity in punishing covenantal violations. He argues that the retributive justice of God is not such an essential attribute of God that he cannot pardon or pass by sin without exercising it.⁴³⁷ The fundamental point is that God may forgive sin without any satisfaction being required. It is at this point that Limborch contradicts the Contra-Remonstrant view of

⁴³¹ Ibid., II, ix, 2.

⁴³² Ibid., II, ix, 6.

⁴³³ Ibid., II, x-xi.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., II, xii, 1: Deus vero, utpote supremus omnium legislator, nulli legi subest; eiusque virtus naturalis essentiae divinae est perfectio, quae illi necessario inest.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., II, xii, 2; xiii, 1.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., II, xii, 24-26.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., II, xii, 27: Non ergo in Deo statuenda est eiusmodi justitia vindicativa, tanquam essentialis eius attributum, quae necessario exigat poenam; adeo ut Deus salva justitia sua, nullum peccatum possit impunitum dimittere; seu, quod eodem redit, per peccati poenam, sive ab ipso peccatore, sive a sponsore eius exactam, justitiae suae satisfacere debeat.

divine justice. While they, the Contra-Remonstrants, "deny that God can forgive without violation of justice any, even the least, sin without satisfaction," he affirms it.⁴³⁸

Limborch defends his principle in several ways. While he does offer some arguments based upon Scripture, such as that several texts of Scripture permit God to inflict a milder punishment than sin deserves (*peccatum meretur*), e.g. Psalm 103:10, his major arguments are based upon his concept of God. These arguments are basically two. The first states that the attribute of God's mercy is also essential to God. The second states that while justice is natural to God, the execution of justice is free. On the ground of these two principles Limborch states that "all essential properties of God are equal, but acts of divine mercy far exceed the acts of divine punishment and vengeance."⁴³⁹ Merciful acts exceed retributive acts because the execution of his attributes is subject to the free disposition of God's will. It is necessary that God be just, that is, that he hate sin, but his execution of punishment is not necessary because he does not punish sin as soon as he hates it. There is often a delay in punishment. *Ibid.*, II, xii, 29, 37. Whether God acts with mercy or retribution is determined by the free will of God. When God punishes, he punishes freely.⁴⁴⁰ God must hate evil because that is a necessary action of the intellect. However, that God actually punishes any sin is an act of the will. Since the will is free, then there is no necessity that God punish any sin. That God ever decides to not punish is due to the moderating influence of mercy upon God's justice.

Implications

The implications of this position are important in considering the ground which forms the basis of God's redemptive work (that is, to free men from the punishment which sin deserves). Since God requires no satisfaction for sin in order to forgive sin, there is no necessity in punishing sin. Consequently, God may, if his will is so disposed by his mercy, to permit some sin to go unpunished. It is in this context that Limborch's covenantal structure functions.

Within the covenant, God has stated that he will punish the impenitent, but will forgive the penitent. In this context, the sins of the penitent believer, in their eternal consequences, simply go unpunished. But because the impenitent persists in rebellion, he must be punished since the covenant (which was enacted by the will of God) so stipulates. Divine justice does not permit hardened sinners to go unpunished since divine Law must not be devalued. Yet, he may forgive the penitent since they have shown respect for the Law.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, II, xii, 38: ...negent Deum salva justitia ullum vel minimum peccatum absque satisfactione remittere posse.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, xii, 27: Tum omnes essentials proprietates in Deo sunt aequales: actus autem misericordiae divinae longe excedunt actus punitiois ac vindictae divinae.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, xii, 32: Naturale dicitur dupliciter: vel quod mere dependet a principiis naturae: hoc modo igni naturale est urere: vel quod congruit cum natura, sed tamen non exseritur in actum, nisi intercedente libera voluntatis determinatione: hoc modo ridere homini est naturale. Hoc posteriori modo justitia vindicans Deo est naturalis, id est, quando punit, actum exercet justitiae suae congruentem: vindicat tamen libere.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, xii, 35: Non videtur justitia divina permittere, ut prae fractos peccatores, & impenitentes legis ac gratiae suae contemtores impunitos dimittat: tum quia lege lata potestati suae absolutae

Thus, the "wrath of God" has two distinct denotations. In one sense it refers to God's essential and natural hatred of sin with a corresponding immutable purpose to punish sin. But in another sense it may refer to his inclination to punish sin which is superseded by his love for man. Limborch summarizes his viewpoint as he responds to the Socinian view of the atonement:⁴⁴²

However, the wrath of God is not always taken in the same sense. Sometimes it denotes the disposition to punish instigated by the magnitude and gravity of the sin, yet not joined with an immutable purpose to punish; in which sense the Lord says to Moses, "*Leave me alone that my fury might burn against them*" (Ex. 32:10). This disposition is often suspended by God through the intervention of his love by which he awaits the repentance of the sinner and pardons the penitent. At other times it signifies the firm and immutable purpose of God to punish the sinner, as in John 3:36, "*He who disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.*" It is not possible to say that God is angry with us in this latter sense when he sent his Son to us out of love because it does not admit any moderation of love. Wrath is only ascribed to him in the first sense. However, this wrath is moderated by love and mercy by which God certainly showed himself reconcilable to and a lover of mankind, and therefore handed over his Son to death that he might at the same time show his love and justice, and be fully reconciled to men upon being placated by the bloody and cruel death of his Son.

The Role of the Death of Christ

While the will of God is free, it must nevertheless act in accordance with justice. This justice, however, does not function independent of God's mercy and love. Consequently, God must save man in such a way that is consistent with his justice which is moderated by love. It is at this point that the death of Christ takes center stage in the theology of Limborch. In some real sense, something happened on the historic cross that

videtur renuntiasse; tum quia legem suam omnibus conculcandam proponeret, & impunitatis spe ad peccandum alliceret, nisi tales puniret: tum etiam, quia majestas eius prae fracta illa impietate laedi videretur; nec quis Deum peccati osorem acerrimum cognoscere posset, si nec impenitentibus ullam ob scelera poenam irrogaret.

⁴⁴² Ibid., III, xx, 8: Sed vero ira Dei non semper eodem significato accipitur. Quandoque denotat affectum puniendi, magnitudine ac gravitate peccati ex stimulatum, non tamen cum immutabili proposito puniendi conjunctum: quo sensu Dominus dicit Mosi *Exod. xxxii.10. "Dimitte me, ut irascatur furor meus contra eos."* Qui affectus saepe a Deo sistitur, interveniente eius amore, quo peccatoris resipiscentiam expectat, & resipiscenti condonat. Aliquando significat firmum ac immutabile Dei propositum peccatorem puniendi: Ut *Joan. iii.36. "Qui Filio inobediens est non videbit vitam, sed ira Dei manet super eum."* Hoc posteriore significato, quando Deus ex amore nobis Filium suum misit, nobis iratus visse dici non potest: Quia illa nullum amoris temperamentum admittit. Solummodo illi ira adscribitur priore significato. Ira autem haec temperamentum quoddam amoris ac misericordiae habuit: ostendit nempe se Deus reconciliabilem, & humani generis amantem; ideoque Filium suum in mortem tradidit, ut amorem suum erga justitiam ostenderet, & cruenta ac dira morte Filii sui placatus, plene hominibus reconciliaretur.

made the salvation of men possible under the new covenant. It is the purpose of this section to understand the function Limborch gives to the death of Christ in his theory of atonement. Since Limborch presents his own concept of atonement only after a series of rebuttals to other prevailing views, it is best to approach an understanding of his view through his refutation of Socinian and Contra-Remonstrant theories. It will then be possible to understand Limborch's theology in distinction from the other concepts, and therefore, enable a precise definition of his own position.

The Socinian Concept of Atonement

Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) was the arch-critic of satisfaction theories of atonement in the late sixteenth century. In the tradition of Abelard, he argued for a moral influence theory of atonement. He insisted upon the absolute freedom of God's will. God could have saved man by a word if he wished. Since it is the will which establishes justice, God may make exceptions if he so desires. Consequently, God may remit satisfaction altogether if he so wills. Socinus compares God's act of forgiveness with man's forgiveness toward each other. If man is able to forgive without satisfaction, then God certainly can. Christ did not, then, die to establish peace between God and man since there is no enmity on God's part. Rather, he came to convince men to repent of their sins and thereby return to God. Influencing man by his life, teachings and willingness to suffer an underserved death, Christ woos man back to God. The Father, however, vindicates his Christ by raising him from the dead. This is a declaration to man that the principles for which Christ died were valid.

Limborch considers this too broad a description of Christ's priestly work. There is nothing in Socinus' description of the work of Christ which cannot be performed by the prophetic and royal offices of Christ. He asks: "Where, in fact, is the sacerdotal act?"⁴⁴³ There is no priestly function at all. Socinus' doctrine of atonement is wholly directed toward man. It affects nothing on God's part. The Father has no anger or wrath to be turned. Socinus argued that God would receive man only if man would repent and believe in him. But this, according to Limborch, is contrary to the office of a priest. A priest's whole work is occupied with God on behalf of man. It is not directed toward man, but God.⁴⁴⁴

Upon this foundation, Limborch offers four biblical objections to the Socinian view. He intends to prove that the sacrifice of Christ may be properly said to placate the anger of God with regard to sin as the cause of his anger.⁴⁴⁵ The first objection rests upon the many testimonies of Scripture that Christ died for us and our sin. The sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were typical of Christ's sacrifice, were expiatory. They removed sin which was the origin of God's anger upon man. Sin merited death, and the death of the animal released man from that penalty because the sins of man were transferred to the

⁴⁴³ Ibid., III, xx, 2: Sed vero, nimis id dilutum est, quam ut in eo Sacerdotium Christi compleri judicetur. Hoc enim quod ipsi Christo tribuunt, tanquam Propheta & Rex facere potest: Quis vero hic est actus Sacerdotalis? quae oblatio?

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., III, xx, 3: Sacerdotis autem actio tota pro hominibus occupatur apud Deum, uti dicitur Hebr. V.1.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., III, xx, 4: Exinde enim liquebit eam habuisse rationem sacrificii proprie dicti, per quam Deus ex irato placatus est redditus, peccataque, irae suae causam, remittere voluit.

animal.⁴⁴⁶ Given this typical action, Limborch concludes that we obtain the remission of sins on the basis of placating the passion of God and commuting in himself the earned penalty of our sin.⁴⁴⁷ It is in this light that Limborch explains the meaning of 2 Cor 5:21:⁴⁴⁸

"God made him to be sin" because by such a cruel death our sins were placed upon Christ in that the punishment of our sin was transferred upon himself.

A second objection to the Socinian view of atonement is based upon the Scriptural use of *hilasterion* (Rom 3:25), *hilasmos* (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and *hilaskethai* (Heb 2:17). Limborch gives a propitiatory sense to these terms. They signify that the "whole efficacy of this propitiation" is attached to the death of Christ whereby man is reconciled to God through Christ's blood.⁴⁴⁹ The third objection is based upon the Scriptural expression that Christ did "for (*huper*) our sins" (1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4; 1 Pet 3:18). Limborch insists that this does not merely designate the final result (as the Socinians claim), but the moving cause of the death of Christ. Christ's death was directed toward sin, and dealt effectively with it.⁴⁵⁰ The fourth objection which Limborch raises is based upon the term "redemption" (*apolutrosis*, *lutron*, and *antlutron*). He understands these terms in this way:⁴⁵¹

These phrases teach that the blood of Christ is the price of redemption which is paid for us so that we might be free from the guilt of sin. And that this exchange of persons was carried out is indicated by the term *anti* which teaches that Christ was afflicted in our place. We, in fact, sinned

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., III, xx, 5: Sane oblationum expiatoriarum, quae fiebant pro peccato, ea fuit vis, ut in ipsas quasi ira Dei derivata, homo ea liberaretur: hoc est, ut ipsis infligeretur mors violenta, cuius intuitu Deus hominem, peccato suo mortem meritum, in gratiam reciperet...Manifesto indicio, quo ipsa sui oblatione peccata auserebant, id est, reatum ac poenam tollebant. Hinc & victimarum capiti manus imponebantur, quasi hoc ritu peccata hominum in illas transferrentur, Levit. I.4 XVI.21.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., III, xx, 5: "Ut itaque typus recte respondeat antitypo suo, necesse est, ut mors a Christo suscepta rationem habeat gravis mali Christo impositi, quo poenam peccatis nostris commertitam quasi in se transtulit, & hac sua passione Deum placavit, nostrorumque peccatorum remissionem obtinuit.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., III, xx, 5: Quia dura adeo morte Christo ob peccata nostra imposita, peccatorum nostrorum poena quasi in ipsum translata est.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., III, xx, 6: Quibus loquendi formulis manifeste indicatur, Dominum Jesum Patrem suum nobis propitium reddidisse: & sive id applicetur morti Jesu Christi, sive illius apparitioni in coelo coram Patre, semper constat, omnem propitiationis huius efficaciam a morte, quam Christus pro peccatoribus sustinuit, derivandam; cum apparitio illa in coelo, nisi per sanguinem, quem Deus ut pro peccatis nostris susum intuitus est, facta foret ad nostri cum Deo reconciliationem inefficax suisset.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., III, xx, 7.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., III, xx, 9: Quibus phrasibus docetur, sanguinem Christi suisse redemptionis pretium, quod pro nobis persolutum est, ut peccatorum reatu liberemur. Et egregiam hic personarum permutationem indicat vocula *anti*, quae Christum nostro loco afflictum docet. Nos siquidem peccaveramus, & irae divinae reatum contraxeramus. Deus nobis praeteritis Filio suo diram ac cruentam mortem imponit, qua nos affici merueramus.

and we incurred the guilt of divine anger. God passed us by to impose upon his own son a dreadful and cruel death which we deserved to suffer.

One fundamental point of disagreement arises from these four objections. While Socinus shrinks from saying that the cross was a function of God's wrath, Limborch sees it as explicitly propitiatory. The mission of the Son, for Socinus, was only a mission of love. But Limborch is able to speak of the mission of the Son as being a propitiatory one, that is, a turning away of God's wrath. However, it is important to remember that Limborch makes a distinction between certain senses of divine wrath. He makes his point in replying to Socinus:⁴⁵²

However, the wrath of God is not always taken in the same sense. Sometimes it denotes the disposition to punish instigated by the magnitude and gravity of the sin, yet not joined with an immutable purpose to punish [Exod 32:10]...This disposition is often suspended by God through the intervention of his love by which he awaits the repentance of the sinner and pardons the penitent. At other times it signifies the firm and immutable purpose of God to punish the sinner [John 3:36]...God cannot be said to be angry with us in this latter sense when he sent his Son to us out of love because it does not admit any moderation of love. Wrath is only ascribed to him in the first sense.

The major question to be asked is this: how does one decide whether God's wrath is to be taken in the first or second sense? Limborch's answer comes in the context of God's covenant with man. God expresses his wrath in the first sense by covenanting with penitent believers, but his wrath in the second sense is expressed toward those who do not enter into the gracious offer of a covenantal relationship with God. Within the context of God's covenant with the believer, God has dealt with sin in the death of Christ. Thus, God is placated and man is reconciled through faith and repentance.

In summary, then, Limborch does not regard the sacrifice of Christ as a mere moral influence upon man. On the contrary, the death of Christ had an objective effect: it dealt with sin in such a way that God's anger toward man was placated. It was no mere martyrdom, but a real sacrifice for sin. It was not the death of a martyr, but the death of a priest.⁴⁵³ He complains that the Socinian view is *mors martyris, non Sacerdotis*. This death was, in some sense, substitutionary, that is, Christ suffered the death we deserved and in our place. However, though he shares biblical terminology with Contra-Remonstrant theologians, Limborch does not view the work of Christ within the same framework as do penal substitutionists. This is apparent from his disagreement with the Contra-Remonstrant exposition of the meaning of Christ's death.

⁴⁵² Ibid., III, xx, 8: Sed vero ira Dei non semper eodem significato accipitur. Quandoque denotat affectum puniendi, magnitudine ac gravitate peccati ex stimulatum, non tamen cum immutabili proposito puniendi conjunctum...Qui affectus saepe a Deo sistitur, interveniente eius amore, quo peccatoris resipiscentiam exspectat, & resipiscenti condonat. Aliquando significat firmum ac immutabile Dei propositum peccatorem puniendi...Hoc posteriore significato, quando Deus ex amore nobis Filium suum misit, nobis iratus suisse dici non potest: Quia illa nullum amoris temperamentum admittit. Solummodo illi ira adscribitur priore significato. See footnote 442 for a fuller quotation.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., III, xx, 10.

The Contra-Remonstrant Concept of Atonement

Dutch Calvinists have historically held to a penal theory of atonement. It is argued that Christ was a personal substitute for the elect. He suffered the penalty of sin which they deserved. In this way, Christ satisfied the demands of God's justice. This was full satisfaction and a full payment. Jesus suffered, according to the Contra- Remonstrants, the full penalty of God's justice both in its temporal and spiritual aspects.

Limborch reacts strongly to this definition of atonement. He states that "this opinion has no foundation in Scripture."⁴⁵⁴ He underscores the fact that the term "satisfaction" does not occur in Scripture, and that the whole theory is "deduced from the term *price* which is ascribed to the death of Christ whereby heaven is purchased for us."⁴⁵⁵ Limborch does not consider this a warranted deduction. He presents four arguments to demonstrate that it is false. These are important since they evidence an underlying pre- supposition with which Limborch approaches the objective value of Christ's work on the cross.

First, he argues that since Christ's death was a sacrifice, and "sacrifices are not payments of debts, nor plenary satisfactions for sins," then Christ's death cannot be characterized by such concepts. Rather, they simply accomplish a gratuitous pardon--the remission of sins.⁴⁵⁶ He supports his conclusion by reference to Lev 4:26, 32, 35 where the effect of sacrifice is propitiation. The implied argument is that while the sacrifices propitiate, they do not satisfy God's rigorous justice.⁴⁵⁷

Second, he argues that Christ did not, in fact, pay the full penalty of sin. His statement is worthy of full quotation:⁴⁵⁸

Christ did not suffer eternal death either in intension, since he did not despair under the weight of divine wrath, or in extent since he hung on the cross three hours and was resurrected from the dead on the third day to eternal life that we might present him to others. And yet this was the punishment due to our sins.

Third, Limborch argues that one cannot graciously forgive an offence or debt which has been fully satisfied or paid. Grace and full satisfaction are incompatible concepts. "If Christ has fully paid and removed the penalties owed to all our sins," he argues, "God is not able to pardon us out of his grace." A full satisfaction demands that God release us from the penalties. God has no right to punish those for whom satisfaction

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., III, xxi, 6: Verum illa sententia nullum habet in Scriptura fundamentum.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., III, xxi, 1: Quod voces Meriti & Satisfactionis attinet, non leguntur illae in Scripturis, quando de Christi obedientia & morte sermo est: quod agnoscit ipse Maresius Loc. x. de Officio Mediatoris, xxix. sed eliciuntur ex voce *pretii*, quae morti Christi adscribitur, quo nobis coelum comparatum est.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., III, xxi, 6: Mors Christi vocatur sacrificium pro peccato; atqui sacrificia non sunt solutiones debitorum, neque plenariae pro peccatis satisfactiones; sed illis peractis conceditur gratuita peccati remissio.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., III, xxi, 6.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., III, xxi, 6: Christ non est passus mortem aeternam, nec intensione, non enim sub irae divinae pondere desperavit; nec extensione; ad tres enim horas in cruce pependit, & tertio die ex mortuis resuscitatus est in vitam aeternam, ut id alias ostendimus. Atqui illa est poena peccatis nostris debita.

has been made. Consequently, in the Contra- Remonstrant position, God does not actually pardon sin by his grace, but he is under obligation to release the former creditor. This is not, however, how Scripture pictures forgiveness. According to Limborch, "Scripture teaches that God grants us the remission of sins in Christ out of his own mercy."⁴⁵⁹ Fourth, he argues that one cannot punish a sin for which payment or satisfaction has already been made. A sin cannot be punished twice. Consequently, if Christ has made full satisfaction for sin, then this implies a universalism "because God would be unjust in exacting a double punishment of sin, the same to Christ, and then to us."⁴⁶⁰ If the sin is paid for, then there is no precondition for the reception of remission of sins. Therefore, God would be unjust to require even faith and repentance as conditions of the remission of sins. All men would be saved on the basis of this full satisfaction alone.

The underlying presupposition of these arguments is this: Christ suffered only the temporal penalty of physical death rather than the eternal, spiritual penalty of the second death. Thus, while Christ unconditionally reversed the effect of Adam's fall for all men by conquering death in the resurrection and suffering the penalty for them, he did not deal with the problem of sin's spiritual penalty. This must be forgiven by God's grace upon meeting the conditions of the covenant. This does not necessarily imply that Christ's death had nothing to do with man's spiritual condition in sin, but only that it did not pay its penalty in the fullest sense. On the contrary, Christ's death dealt with sin objectively in that it established a covenant in which men may obtain the forgiveness of sins upon faith and repentance. The priestly work of Christ means that he functions as guarantor who ensures that both parties execute the conditions of the covenant. Christ did not offer himself as a payment for debts, but as a mediator of a new covenant in which sins are graciously forgiven.⁴⁶¹ The price which placated the Father was not one of debtor to creditor, but a price which was acceptable to him.⁴⁶² The payment of Christ, therefore, was not sufficient for the penalty of sin per se, but it was sufficient for God to establish a new covenant in which he would forgive sin without full satisfaction (that is, graciously).

Limborch's Theory of Atonement

This Remonstrant's theory of atonement may properly be called governmental. While he may not agree in every particular with the view of his Remonstrant predecessor Hugo Grotius, he may be fairly placed in the same category, or at least the same general tradition.⁴⁶³ Initially, Limborch defines his theory in this way:⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., III, xxi, 6: Si Christus omnes peccatis nostris debitas poenas plene sustinet & exhaustit, nihil Deus nobis ex gratia condonare posset...Atqui docet Scriptura, Deum ex misericordia sua nobis concedere remissionem peccatorum in Christo.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., III, xxi, 6: quia Deus injustus foret, eiusdemque peccati poenam bis exigeret, semel a Christo, dein a nobis.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., III, xxi, 7.

⁴⁶² Ibid., III, xxi, 8: Ita enim pretium quod Christus persolvit, juxta Dei Patris aestimationem persolutum est. Sane ipsam redemptionis, aut redemptionis pretii vocem non sufficere ad plenariam illam, quam urgent, solutionem comprobandum, vel exinde evincitur, quod Deus dicat, se aliquando unum populum alterius populi lutron constituere: Esa. XLIII.3.

The Lord Jesus Christ was truly and properly called a sacrifice for our sins by bearing grievous torments and the accursed death on the cross, and after his resurrection from the dead by entering through his own blood into the heavenly tabernacle where he presented himself in person to the Father. By his sacrifice, the Father who was angry at our sins was placated and was reconciled to us. Consequently, he suffered for us and grievous affliction in our place and even in this way averted the deserved penalty away from us.

This succinct statement raises more questions than it answers. Its language affirms nothing that a Contra-Remonstrant would not hold. The statement is valuable only if one understands the context in which Limborch means it.

The concept of propitiation implies some kind of satisfaction. Since the Father required some kind of sacrifice for reconciliation, then the Father was satisfied by a sacrifice. Limborch does not object to the term satisfaction per se. He objects to it only in the sense that it is not a biblical term, and therefore should be considered optional. He does not object to the concept itself if it is properly understood. Indeed he even uses the term on some occasions.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, this is the crucial point at which to understand Limborch. In what sense did Jesus satisfy the justice of God, or pay the price of sin?

Limborch poses the question in this manner: "What was the evil Christ suffered in our place?"⁴⁶⁶ His answer begins by reasserting that Christ did not suffer the same punishment which we deserved, that is, eternal death. Thus, the Lord did not suffer spiritual death or separation from the Father. He suffered simply the "grave misery and cruel death in our place which was in stead of the punishment which might have been

⁴⁶³ OttoHeick, "Arminianism," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 1:104 states that both Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and Conrad Vorstius (1569-1622) were governmental theologians. These early Remonstrants formed the foundation of atonement theology within Dutch Remonstrantism. The first major defence of the governmental theory was written by Grotius, *A Defense of the Catholic Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ Against Faustus Socinus*, trans. by Frank H. Foster (Andover: Draper, 1889). See W. F. Beckwith, "The Theology of Hugo Grotius, Jurist-Theologian," (Th.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1959). While there are differences between Grotius and Limborch, they are not substantial. Hodge, *Theology*, 3:189, 190 calls attention to this grouping: "The leading Remonstrant or Arminian theologians, as Episcopius, Curcellaeus, and Limborch, differ from Grotius in their mode of presenting this subject. Instead of regarding the work of Christ as an example of punishment, designed to deter from the commission of sin, they adhere to the Scriptural mode of regarding Hims as a ransom and sacrifice. The difference however is more in form than in reality."

⁴⁶⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxii, 1: Quod Dominus Jesus Christus fuerit sacrificum verum ac proprie dictum pro peccatis nostris; sustinendo gravissimos angores & maledictam crucis mortem, & postea ex mortuis suscitatus per proprium sanguinem ingrediendo in sacrarium coeleste, ibique se coram Patre sistendo: quo suo sacrificio Patrem, peccatis nostris iratum, placavit nosque illi reconciliavit. Tulit itaque pro nobis & nostro loco gravissimam afflictionem, atque ita poenam commertam a nobis avertit.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, III, xxi, 1. For instance, III, xxii, 2: Atque hoc sensu Dominus morte sua Patri po nobis satisfacisse.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, III, xxii, 2: Quodnam sit illud malum quod Christus loco nostro sustinuit?

justly inflicted upon us."⁴⁶⁷ The only penalty which Christ suffered was physical death. This was the "curse" of the Law.⁴⁶⁸ God, in his grace, accepted the physical death of Christ as a sufficient payment for sin with regard to the physical demands of the Law. This was his satisfaction. It was not a satisfaction based upon the rigor of divine justice (*rigori justitiae divinae*) that demands eternal death, but upon the free will of the Father who forgives graciously.⁴⁶⁹ It is the freedom of God that gives him the absolute right of declaring what ransom will satisfy him.⁴⁷⁰ God's justice, therefore, is satisfied both in terms of its temporal, spiritual and eternal penalties by the simple physical death of the God-Man Jesus Christ on the basis of the divine will alone.

Thus, the Father is placated by the acceptance of a price that is less than man deserves, but is able, by his grace and mercy, to offer man salvation based upon this acceptance. But two questions arise at this point which help to illuminate Limborch's position even further. First, why did God even need a satisfaction in the first place? What is there about the justice of God which requires a propitiation of this kind? Limborch maintains that Christ merited a "suspension of wrath" (*iram suam suspenderit*) for man.⁴⁷¹ It appears, then, that Christ, according to this Remonstrant theologian, did accomplish some objective end. Yet, this suspension was not accomplished by the payment of the full penalty of sin. It was accomplished without dealing objectively with the real problem of sin--man's spiritual separation from God. In what sense, then, does Limborch maintain that Christ suspended or appeased God's wrath? Here the answer is similar to all other governmental theologians. Wrath was suspended in the sense that the only obstacle which prevented God from forgiving man was removed. That obstacle was the public justice of God (even though this was not an absolute necessity, but simply a covenantal function).

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., III, xxii, 2: Sed tulit miseriam gravem & mortem cruentam nostro loco; quae suit vice poenae a nobis juste sustinendae.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., III, xxi, 9: concerning Galatians 3:13, Ipsse etiam Apostolus satis indicat, se non maledictionem aeternam, sed maledictam crucis mortem, quam Christus in se suscepit, intelligere, addens immediate; Quia Scriptum est, maledictus omnis qui pendet in ligno. Cf. his *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:31: Verum per maldictionem non intelligit male dictionem divinam, qua Christus aeternos ignis inferna cruciatus sustinuit: sed mortem maledictam crucis: ut ex verbis immediate frequentibus liquet: quam pro nobis ac peccatis nostris sustinendo Deo gratum suit sacrificium, per quod liberationem a maledictione Legis nobis impetravit, adeo ut, si in ipsum credamus, per gratium divinam salutem simus adepturi aeternam, non obstantibus quae ante fidem commisimus, peccatis, per quae maledictorem Legis eramus meriti.

⁴⁶⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxii, 5: Deo autem, uti vidimus, ius absolutum est declarandi, quo pretio sibi satisfieri velit. F. A. O. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, reprinted 1950), 2:357-358 places Limborch among the "acceptabilationists." They "teach that Christ's obedience and suffering was not in itself (*ex interna sua perfectione*) a sufficient ransom for the sins of men, but was merely accepted as such by God (*per liberam Dei acceptationem per gratuitam Dei acceptationem*)." He cites *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxi, 6 and xxii, 5 as confirmation of his assertion. He places Duns Scotus at the head of this classification of theologians.

⁴⁷⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxii, 2. Limborch also emphasizes this point in *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:25: non rigori justitiae, sed vountati divinae justae simul ac misericordii, satisfecerit.

⁴⁷¹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxii, 3.

Man needed to learn that God hates sin, and will, according to his covenant, act to punish the impenitent.⁴⁷² Consequently, while satisfaction was not "absolutely necessary," it was not superfluous because of the public demonstration of God's justice. In the death of his Son, God "manifested his own hatred of sin," and "demonstrated" his justice to man.⁴⁷³ Therefore, the death of Christ as a means of forgiveness was covenantally necessary, but not absolutely necessary.

Second, if God may determine the acceptability of a sacrifice by his free will, why did not God accept a lesser satisfaction than he did? Here Limborch betrays his affinities with Socinian theology. Why was the death of Christ covenantally necessary? His answer emphasizes both the role of moral influence in terms of choosing the Son of God and the example of Christ. In this respect, Limborch is in danger of subsuming the priestly work of Christ under his prophetic office--a charge he laid at the feet of Socinus. This danger arises because the principle upon which God chooses the Son of God over a lamb or some other man is one of moral influence. There is nothing inherently valuable about this sacrifice in terms of the justice of God since, whether it be the sacrifice of a lamb, man or the Son of God, none suffer the full penalty. Consequently, the difference between the sacrifice of a lamb and the sacrifice of Christ, in relation to the justice of God, is one of degree, not kind. There was no "natural necessity" in the sacrifice of Christ since "God lies under no natural necessity to punish sin."⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, Christ was sacrificed on motives of influence rather than satisfaction (payment). In this respect, Limborch's theory of atonement reduces to that of Socinus. The only substantive difference between them is the answer to the first question. However, even this reduces to a moral influence because the reason God demonstrated his justice was not for the Father's sake, but for our sake so that we might learn to love justice and hate evil. The demonstration of public justice itself was motivated by considerations of a moral nature. Consequently, the priestly work of Christ is not the sole ground of redemption. The prophetic and royal offices of Christ play a foundational role in the meriting of redemption.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxiii, 18: Ut peccatum summo habeamus odio, utpote Deo adeo ingratum, ut illius reatum non nisi hostia adeo eximia tolli voluerit, propriumque Filium illius abolitioni impenderit: Qui enim adeo detestatus est peccatum, multo gravius suae contentum Foederisque Novi violationem vindicaturus est.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., III, xviii, 5: Non quicquid absolute non est necessarium, eo ipso supervacaneum est...Dura quippe Filii sui passione, quam ad redemptionem hominum requisivit, odium suum erga peccatum ostendit; cuius nullum effectum, nullo intercedente sacrificio expiatorio, homines conspexissent: atque ita se justum esse iudicem injustitiaeque vindicem demonstravit. See also Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:25: quod Deus Christum proposuerit propitiatorium per sanguine eius, ut ita demonstraret justitiam suam, sive amorem erga justitiam, & odium contra peccatum.

⁴⁷⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xviii, 4: Ex iis quae antea fusius de Justitia Dei vindicativa disputavimus, liquet, nulla naturae necessitate Deum constringi ut peccata puniat: nec ergo ulla naturae necessitate constringui dici potest, ut pro peccatis, quae remissurus est, satisfactionem exigat.

⁴⁷⁵ Limborch to Locke, on December 2, 1694 in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 1823. Describing his witness to an unbelieving Jewish woman, he writes: "Since she insisted, and wanted to learn my opinion, I showed that opinon about Christ's priesthood is principally threefold: that of the Contraremonstrants and that of Socinus, which I regarded as two extremes directly opposed to each

In conclusion, according to Limborch's theory of atonement, Christ paid a real, but not a full, price to the justice of God. The price was his physical death which demonstrated that God hated evil and loved justice. The price had no relation to the eternal penalty of sin except that it opens the way of reconciliation by the suspension of the Father's wrath. Since this wrath was publicly displayed through Jesus, the Father is appeased and the way is now open for reconciliation with man. The Father has opened the way of salvation by the establishment, through his Son, of a new covenant in which the forgiveness of sins is proffered upon the condition of faith and repentance.

Faith as Righteousness

The death of Christ forms the ground upon which the new covenant is established. Within this new covenant the Father provides the remission of sins through justification. Grace is given by the Father in the act of justification. It is the purpose of this section to examine the nature of that act in Limborch's system of theology. Faith is the condition of justification. The concern here is not to understand the act of faith or what justifying faith is, but to define justification itself, and how faith plays a role in the acceptance as righteous before God. By such a discussion, it will appear that within the context of Limborch's theology justification is not only grounded upon the death of Christ, but upon the righteousness inherent in faith itself.

A Broad Definition of Justification

There are, according to Limborch, three senses in which the term "justification" (*justificatio*) is used in Scripture. It may signify (1) the Law of God which teaches righteousness as in Ps 119:5, 8, 16, 20, (2) the personal acquisition of righteousness by which one who was previously unrighteous is now righteous as in 1 Cor 6:11 and Rev 22:11, and (3) the forensic righteousness which acquits a man of guilt and declares him to be righteous as in Prov 17:15, 23 and Luke 10:29.⁴⁷⁶ Catholicism, according to Limborch, understands the doctrine of justification in the second sense, but Limborch claims to understand it in the third sense. According to Limborch, justification is a judicial act of God in which a man's guilt is absolved and he is treated as righteous.⁴⁷⁷ Correspondingly, he defines justification in this way:⁴⁷⁸

other, and ours, which is midway between those extremes. I told her what we found wanting in either extreme opinion and how ours avoids all the inconveniences of the other opinions, I added that I regard the ground of salvation as being not in Christ's priesthood alone but also in his prophetic office and his kingship." According to Reformed theology, the satisfactio or the ground of salvation belongs solely to the priestly office of Christ. See Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, rev. ed., trans. by G. T. Thomson, and edited by Ernst Bizer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprinted 1978), pp. 457ff.

⁴⁷⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 1.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 5-12.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 14: *Justificatio haec est misericors ac gratiosa actio Dei, qua peccatorem vere resipiscentem ac credentem, per & propter Jesum Christum vera fide apprehensum plene ab omni reatu absolvit; sive, gratis peccata propter fidem in Jesum Christum remittit, ipsamque fidem in*

Justification is a merciful and gracious act of God by which sinners who truly repent and believe are fully absolved from all guilt through and on account of Jesus Christ apprehended by a true faith, or graciously remits sins on account of faith in Jesus Christ and that same faith is graciously imputed for righteousness. It is clear from this definition that the justification consists of two parts: remittance of guilt and the imputation of righteousness.

Limborch argues that the "remission of sins is nothing more than the non-infliction of the deserved punishment of sin."⁴⁷⁹ God remits sins based upon and through the satisfaction which Christ made on the cross. God has accepted his suffering in the place of our suffering on account (*propter*) of our response in faith and repentance. The second part of justification is the imputation of righteousness. This is the "gracious judgment of God" by which he esteems (*aestimatio*) a penitent believer "as if he is perfectly righteous and had always obeyed his law and will in all things."⁴⁸⁰

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to examine in detail Limborch's concept of imputation. This is important because of the nature of that righteousness which is imputed to the believer. It will become evident that Limborch regards faith as forming part of that righteousness rather than considering the whole of that righteousness belonging to Christ. If this is the case, then Limborch is open to the charge that justification is not simply a declaration from God, but is dependent upon an inherent righteousness in man, that is, his faith and repentance. God, then, esteems (*aestimatio*) faith as righteousness because faith is a righteous act even though it is affirmed by a sinner (that is, one who is not perfectly righteous). Consequently, God justifies only those who have acted righteously in faith, or, to put it another way, God only accounts as fully righteous those who have established a ground of righteousness for themselves in faith.

Imputation of Christ's Righteousness Denied

Limborch explicitly repudiates the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. This is nothing but a deduction from his concept of atonement. According to Limborch, Christ did not merit anything for man but release from physical death. He could not merit eternal life for him since he did not pay the penalty of eternal death. Thus, Christ has acquired no real righteousness for man. Rather, he has only made satisfaction for the temporal penalty of sin. Christ died in our place, but he did not live in our place. *Ibid.*, III, xxi, 3-5. Consequently, his theory of atonement excludes the imputation of righteousness of Christ to the believer.

It is on this background that Limborch argues against the Contra-Remonstrant doctrine of merited righteousness. On scriptural grounds, he asserts that "nowhere does Scripture teach that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us."⁴⁸¹ The exact phrase cannot be found in Scripture. Though certain passages are used to teach the concept, he rejects

justitiam gratiose imputat.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 16: *remissio peccatorum aliud nihil est, quam poenae peccatis promeritae non inflicio.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 17: *Imputatio justitiae, est gratiosa mentis divinae aestimatio, qua credentem in Filium suum, licet antea peccatorem & impium, nunc autem resipiscentem, & per fidem opera poenitentia digna producentem, eo loco reputat, ac si perfecte justus esset, & legi ac voluntati ipsius per omnia semper paruisset.*

the Contra- Remonstrant interpretations. He considers Romans 5:19 the most important passage in this debate and devotes considerable space to it his *Commentarius* and *Theologia*. The disputed text reads (NIV).⁴⁸²

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The key verb is "made" or "constituted." Limborch's understanding of that verb is best illustrated by how he construes the parallel phrase concerning Adam. He argues that the text means that men are treated "exactly as if they are sinners."⁴⁸³ The treatment to which he refers is the effect of sin--death. They are treated like sinners because they physically die. It was in this sense that Christ was treated as a sinner on the cross as is evidenced by 2 Cor 5:21. He states that the many "are treated as sinners on account of the sin of the one man Adam, that is, they die exactly like Adam."⁴⁸⁴ The one, then, did not constitute the many as actually and truly guilty, but put them into a position where they are treated as if they were guilty, that is, they would die physically like Adam. The corresponding point concerning Christ is that he did not render the many actually and truly righteous, but put them into a position where they are treated as if they were righteous, that is, they would inherit eternal life as Christ. Adam's physical descendants are treated like Adam, just as Christ's spiritual descendants are treated like Christ. Men become related to Christ on the condition of imperfect observance of the Law of God upon which God considers their imperfect obedience as perfect on account of Christ.⁴⁸⁵ Spiritual regeneration is conditioned on faith but obtained through Christ who has opened the way of salvation.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., VI, iv, 25: nusquam doces Scriptura, justitiam Christi nobis imputari. Cf. *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 5:19: Nusquam enim Scriptura dicit, justitiam Christi nobis imputari, sed nobis propter Christum, justitiam, sue fidem nostram in justitiam imputari.

⁴⁸² Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 5:19 uses the verb constituere where the NIV uses "made."

⁴⁸³ Ibid.: Sed ita tractari, perinde ac si peccatores essent. See *Theologia Christiana*, III, iii, 18: peccatorem constitui, phrasi Hebraea, significat, perinde ut peccatorem tractari. In both texts he gives 1 Kgs 1:21, Gen 43:9 and 44:32 as examples.

⁴⁸⁴ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 5:19: Eodem sensus Deus dicitur 2 Cor V.21...id est, tradidisse ut pro nobis morte ignominiosa tanquam peccator afficeretur. Dicit ergo Apostolus, quod multi, nempe qui ab Adamo ad Mosem nixerunt, tractari sunt ut peccatores propter uniu hominis Adami peccatum, id est, mortui sunt, perinde atque Adamus.

⁴⁸⁵ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, IV, iv, 27: Quorum verborum sense est: nos, licet perfecte non fuerimus justis, tamen a Deo gratiose reputandos pro justis, ac vitae aeternae praemio decorandos, propter Christum qui perfecte justus fuit, & ex quo spiritualiter regenerati sumus: perinde uti illi, qui ex Adamo geniti fuerunt, & usque ad legem vixerunt, fuere reputati ut transgressores & morte puniti, licet non tam perfecte ut Adam, qui expressam Dei legem transgressus fuerat ...Ita & nos, observatores quidem legis divinae, sed imperfecti, & longe infra perfectam Christi obedience, justitiae praemium consequemur, non tam ob nostram justitiam, quam propter Jesum Christum, perfectamque eius justitiam; ad quam Deus respiciens, justitiam nostram, qui in ipsum credimus, gratiose ac si perfecta effet acceptare, praemioque perfectae justitiae honorare vult. Hunc verborum horum esse sensum, alibi evicimus.

⁴⁸⁶ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 5:19: Sed per & propter justitiam Christi, quia enim per fidem spiritualiter ex ipso regenerati sunt, censentur etiam in sortem illius successisse, & participes

The point that this text raises is this: the righteousness of Christ must be construed as a cause or ground of justification. Limborch believes that he can assimilate that point by acknowledging the blood of Christ as the reason why God suspended his wrath. He argues that "Scripture never says that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, but righteousness is imputed to us on account of Christ or our faith is imputed for righteousness."⁴⁸⁷ Consequently, Christ is said to be "our righteousness" by metonymy in which the effect is put for the efficient power.⁴⁸⁸ Only in the sense that Christ is the "cause" of our salvation can he be said to be "our righteousness." From this perspective, it is difficult to distinguish between imputation and the remission of sins. Whereas the Contra-Remonstrants distinguish between the cause of imputation (i.e., active obedience of Christ) and the cause of remission of sins (i.e., passive obedience of Christ), Limborch considers imputation as "caused" by the passive obedience of Christ while rejecting any causation by active righteousness. The imputation of righteousness is one of the effects of Christ's satisfaction on the cross:⁴⁸⁹

We are said to be justified by the blood of Christ as the cause which moved God to will to impute righteousness to us sinners; not, however, without faith which God has proposed as the condition of justification. (Rom 3:25). But because the blood of Christ is the cause for which our faith and repentance are accepted by God for the obtaining of remission, therefore the blood alone is usually mentioned in the matter of justification.

It is clear that Limborch brings certain presuppositions to the text which is contrary to the concept of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. One of these presuppositions is his theory of atonement, but there are two other equally fundamental objections to the Contra-Remonstrant theory. First, Limborch regards such a transference of righteousness, accompanied by a merited eternal life, as "impossible" (*non potest*).⁴⁹⁰ This is true because there is no sin but what is personal.⁴⁹¹ Consequently, there is no righteousness but what is personal. One can only be truly righteous if he has personally acquired that righteousness for himself. He argues, then, that "if God judges Christ's righteousness to be our righteousness," then he wills an injustice since "it is not our righteousness."⁴⁹² Consequently, it is contrary to the nature of righteousness that it can be transferred. The implication of such an argument is that fallen man can only be

redduntur justificationis ad vitam aeternam, quam, nisi ex Christo per fidem ac resipiscentiam spiritualiter regeniti essent, sperare non potuissent.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.: Nusquam enim Scriptura dicit, justitiam Christi nobis imputari, sed nobis propter Christum justitiam, seu fidem nostram in justitiam imputari.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.: {Concerning 1 Cor 1:30} Est itaque hic metonymia effecti pro efficiente; & sensus est, quod Christus a Deo nobis fit constitutus autor, vel causa, quo sapientiam, justitiam, sanctificationem & redemptionem consequamur.

⁴⁸⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxiii, 8: Dicimur justificare per sanguinem Christi, ut causam quae Deum impulit, ut nobis peccatoribus justitiam imputare velit; non tamen absque fide, quam Deus justificationis conditionem proposuit, Rom. III.25. Sed quia sanguis Christi causa est, quod fides, & resipiscentia nostra Deo grata sint ad obtinendum remissionem, ideo solius sanguinis Christi mentio fieri solet in negotio justificationis.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., IV, iv, 25.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., III, iii, 17: nullum enim datur peccatum nisi personale.

considered righteous if he is, in fact, righteous. This means that in order for God to consider any man righteous he must perform some righteous act. However imperfect that righteous act is, God then treats it as if it were perfect obedience.

A second reason is grounded in the nature of the covenant God has with man. This covenant has certain necessary conditions which the imputation of Christ's righteousness, in Limborch's view, would nullify. According to him, if Christ had merited righteousness for man, then nothing could be required of man for justification, righteousness or holiness of life.⁴⁹³ He assumes that everyone recognizes that Scripture teaches that justification and eternal life follow (*consequamur*) faith and holiness which are demanded (*exigit*) and required (*requisitam*) of all men as necessary conditions. Without meeting those conditions no one obtains justification. However, if Jesus merited righteousness in our place, then nothing can be demanded of us (*nihil a nobis exigi potest*) as necessary conditions for participation in those blessings. If he has performed all our duties for us and in our place (*pro nobis ac loco nostro*), then by imputation we are perfectly righteous without faith, repentance or obedience.⁴⁹⁴ He states the objection in this way:⁴⁹⁵

However, if Christ discharged all duties for us, he was also made grace for us. Therefore, no obligation remains that obligates us as a duty because God cannot demand righteousness of us since Christ has now discharged them in our place.

In the opinion of Limborch, the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is false because it excludes all demands upon us as conditions for receiving justification. This undermines Limborch's concept of the covenantal relationship between God and man. Indeed, in his thinking, it is destructive of all true holiness since it extinguishes the

⁴⁹² Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 4:5: Atqui non solet secundum veritatem, si Deus judicaret justitiam Christi esse nostrum justitiam; quia non est nostra justitia; sed per imputationem divinae juxta ipsos demum fit justitia nostra, id est, quia Deus eam pro justitia nostra habere vult.

⁴⁹³ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxi, 2

⁴⁹⁴ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 5:19: Cui accedit, quod passim Scriptura, ut justificationem ac salutem aeternam consequamur, a nobis exigit fidem & sanctimoniam, tanquam conditionem necessario requisitam, & sine qua eam nemo obtinebit. Vide inter alia Mt. V.20. Rom. VIII.13. I Cor. VI.9,10,11. Heb. XII.14. I Joh. I.7. III.7. Apoc. XXII.14 & allis plurimis locis. Si autem D. Jesus nostro loco justus fuit, & hac sua justitia meruit, ut ea nobis imputetur, nihil a nobis exigi potest, ut eius participes fiamus: quic quid enim a nobis tanquam officium, exigi posset, Christus iam loco nostro praestitit & implevit; adeo ut, si nos officio nostro desimus, nihilo minus per justitiam Christi, qui omnia officia nostra pro nobis ac loco nostro implevit, nobis imputationem perfecte justisimus.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: Atqui si Christus omnia officia pro nobis praestitit, etiam pro nobis gratus fuit. Nulla ergo restat obligatio, quae nos ad officium illud obstringit: quod enim Christus nostro loco iam praestitit, id Deus a nobis juste exigere non potest.

motivation of the believer to be holy which is that believers are holy in order to be saved.⁴⁹⁶ If there is no necessary condition, then there is no motive for holiness.⁴⁹⁷

Consequently, Limborch concludes that Scripture does not teach the imputation of Christ's righteousness. The phrase does not occur in Scripture. Further, the concept is contrary to the true nature of Christ's atonement and the nature of the covenant. In addition, it is impossible to transfer personal righteousness from one person to another. The redemption of man depends upon the righteousness of Christ only in the sense that his blood opened the way of salvation by the propitiation of God's wrath. His righteousness, then, may be considered an "external means" in that it established a new covenant between God and man, but it is not an "internal means" in the sense that man is considered righteous by virtue of his acceptance of the righteousness of Christ in the place of his own unrighteousness.⁴⁹⁸ Limborch summarizes the distinction in this way:⁴⁹⁹

So also believers in Jesus Christ who obey the commandments of God, though not so perfectly as Jesus Christ, will be justified not without any respect to their obedience, but not so much on account of their obedience but because they are spiritually regenerated out of Christ. For the sake of his perfect obedience God is willing to graciously accept their imperfect, yet sincere, obedience and impute to them the reward of perfect obedience.

Limborch does not deny that man is accepted on account of (*propter*) his obedience. He simply wants to see it within a certain framework. Since man's obedience (his imperfect righteousness) is fundamental to his acceptance as perfectly righteous, this raises the question of the ground of the grace received.

Imputed Righteousness in Limborch

This Remonstrant theologian does not reject the concept of imputation. He explicitly affirms it in many places. However, the difference between the Contra-Remonstrant and Limborch is the content of that righteousness. The righteousness which is imputed, according to the Contra-Remonstrant, is the righteousness which Christ

⁴⁹⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, ix, 25: ideoque & justitiam Christi, pro electis praestitam, fidei objectum faciunt...tales fides noxia est pietati, quia illius necessitatem ut divina promissa consequamur nollit.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, v, 5; vi, 7. It is important to remember that the understanding is enlightened by the Word, and the will is moved by promises and threats. If the threat is not real or the promises conditioned, then the will cannot be motivated.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 21: Medium extra nos Deus ipse nobis per gratiam suam procurat, lutron Jesu Christi. VI, iv, 22: Medium in nobis Deus a nobis tanquam conditionem ad Justificationem requisitam exigit, estque fides in Jesum Christum. It is important to note that Limborch places the sacrifice of Christ and human faith in the same category: medium.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, III, iii, 15: Ita etiam fideles in Jesum Christum, mandatis divinis obedientes, licet non tam perfecte ut Jesus Christus, justificabuntur: non quidem absque ullo ad obedientiam ipsorum respectu, sed tamen non tam propter ipsorum obedientiam, quam quia ex Christo spiritualiter sunt regeneriti; respectu cuius obedientiae perfectae Deus ipsorum obedientiam, licet imperfectam, sinceram tamen, gratiose pro perfecta acceptar vult, ipsisque perfectae obedientiae praemium imputare.

merited through his active obedience. The righteousness which is imputed, according to Limborch, is God's gracious estimation of the human act of faith. This is no mere semantical difference. It is a fundamental disagreement concerning the ground of grace itself. It is the difference between being clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness and being clothed in our own partial righteousness graciously estimated by God to be perfect. It is the difference between a real righteousness forensically imputed to us and a fabricated righteousness fictiously ("graciously" in Limborch's terminology) imputed to us. It is the difference between righteousness being wholly derived from Christ's work or righteousness partially derived from our own faith. Limborch must escape the charge that man partially merits his salvation by his obedience.⁵⁰⁰

The fountain, or primary cause, of justification is the mercy and goodness of God. If it were not for God's mercy all sinners would be rigidly punished.⁵⁰¹ However, even though it is out of pure mercy that God justifies, he has willed to use certain means without which he would not justify. "One is outside of us, and another is in us."⁵⁰² As indicated above (see footnote 71), the external medium is the redemptive act of Christ on the cross and the internal media are the human acts of faith and obedience.

It is significant that Limborch has placed the cross and faith on the same basis. The work of Christ through his blood, which he elsewhere terms a "cause," is paralleled with the human response. What Christ did, he did for everyone, that is, he released all men from physical death and suspended God's wrath for all men.⁵⁰³ He, then, is the external means or cause of salvation in the sense he did all that was necessary for that man could not do himself (that is, what was external to man). He "merited" for all men the suspension of God's wrath, more time for repentance, a call to faith and regeneration, and the bestowal of all assistance necessary to answer the call. But he did not "merit," by his external action, faith and regeneration for anyone.⁵⁰⁴ Limborch reasons that if God had merited "faith and regeneration" by the cross of Christ, then it belongs to everyone and God would have to work it irresistibly in everyone. On that basis, God could not require of anyone what he irresistibly and immutably does for them. God cannot have done for us what he requires of us.

Since the external medium (*extra medium*) is a meriting action performed by Christ, it is safe to assume that the internal action (*medium in nobis*) is also a meriting

⁵⁰⁰ The nature and definition of justifying faith is the subject of the next chapter. Here the concern is the ground of God's gracious imputation. The question at this point is not what the nature of faith is, but what function does faith have, if any, in the ground of grace.

⁵⁰¹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 20: Fons est misericordia & benignitas Dei: Quoniam enim omnes peccatores eramus, & poenae rei, nemo, si Deus rigide nobiscum agere velit, in iudicio Dei subsistere posset.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 21: Sed licet Deus ex pura misericordia nos justificet, media tamen quaedam intervenire vult, sine quorum interventu justificationem nobis neutiquam concessurus est. Horum unum extra nos, alterum in nobis est.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, IV, iv

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, III, xxii, 3: Ita est: meritus est, hoc est, impetravit & effecit, ut Deus iram suam suspenderit, gratiae tempus nobis concesserit, ad fidem & regenerationem nos vocaverit, omniaque gratiae auxilia quibus vocationi divinae parere possimus largitus sit: ipsam autem fidem & regenerationem nobis non meruit.

action on our part. This internal action consists in faith which is "our act of obedience."⁵⁰⁵ However, Limborch disavows any concept of merit. He argues that our act of faith is so imperfect that it could not stand the test of God's rigorous judgment. Consequently, the imputation of righteousness and the remission of sins does not belong to it in such a way that they are owed to faith. On the contrary, it is by God's gracious acceptance of faith as righteousness upon which these blessings are based. Limborch summarizes the perspective in this selection:⁵⁰⁶

It is therefore such an act which even though in itself is by no means proved perfect, but is in many ways deficient, yet it is graciously and freely accepted by God as complete and perfect, and on account of which God wills graciously to bestow upon men the remission of sins and the reward of eternal life.

Faith and obedience, then, are not meritorious because they are not "strictly accepted" (*stricte accepta*), but accepted by grace.⁵⁰⁷

While gracious acceptance dominates his perspective, he does not escape the charge of human merit. He has paralleled the work of Christ and the response of man in the same breath with the same word: both are called *media*. His use of this term betrays the sense of ground or cause rather than mere appropriation since Christ, in his external medium, merited certain objects for man. Consequently, the concept of merit is equally applicable to faith which is man's internal medium. Limborch objects that faith does not earn God's acceptance, but graciously receives it. However, this is also strictly true of Christ's sacrifice itself. God graciously suspended his wrath based upon a sacrifice that does not earn God's acceptance. It is impossible to see how Limborch may use the term "merit" for Christ's external medium, and not for man's internal medium. Further, Limborch, by using the term *propter* in connection with faith, presupposes a certain meritorious action. He affirms that God accepts man *propter* faith.⁵⁰⁸ No doubt Limborch would respond that our faith is only accepted *propter* Christ's obedience.⁵⁰⁹ However, though one is accepted by God *propter* Christ, it is only *propter* faith that God so considers us. Man must submit to this righteous and obedient act (though it is an imperfect one) in order to fall under the umbrella of God's imputation towards eternal life.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 30: Fides autem ipsa est actus obedientiae nostrae.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, iv, 31: Est itaque talis actus, qui licet in se spectatus perfectus nequaquam sit, sed in multis deficiens; tamen a Deo, gratiosa & liberrima voluntate, pro pleno & perfecto acceptatur, & propter quem Deus homini gratiose remissionem peccatorum & vitae aeterna praemium conferre vult.

⁵⁰⁷ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 6:23.

⁵⁰⁸ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 31. See also VI, iv, 7: id est, hominem propter fidem a Deo censi ut justum. Also *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 1:17: hoc est, quod Desu fidem habet pro justitia, & hominibus propter fidem justitiam imputat. No

⁵⁰⁹ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 4:5: tum obedientiam nostram ex fide praestitam, licet imperfectam, propter Christum perfectamque eius obedientiam, gratiose acceptat, ac si perfecta esset, & praemis perfectae justitiae renunerari vult...ut ita ex gratia propter Christum eiusque perfectam justitiam remissionem peccatorum & justificationem consequamur.

The righteousness of faith, then, is simply God's estimation of our imperfect righteousness as perfect righteousness on account of Christ. This presupposes some act of righteousness on our part. Faith, then, is considered as part of the ground of justification in just the same way that Christ's work is considered a ground. The ultimate source is God's free, but gracious, will which moves him to be reconciled to man through (on the basis of) Christ's death on the cross and man's faith. Both *media* are given gracious (undeserved) estimations and as a result considered sufficient. Both acts, however, by God's gracious estimation, merit certain considerations. Christ's merited release from physical death for all men, and faith merits release from spiritual death for the individual.

Conclusion

Limborch fails to make a fundamental distinction between the ground of grace and the appropriation of grace. He formulates the ground (Christ's life and death) in such a way which parallels the means or appropriation of grace (faith and repentance). By this confusion, he gives merit to faith or excludes merit from the work of Christ. Either Limborch must exclude the idea of merit altogether, which would be detrimental to one's concept of atonement, or he must acknowledge the meritorious action of faith. His problem, then, is that he does not care for either alternative. This problem is simply the outgrowth of his fundamental premise: the absolute freedom of God's will in man's redemption. Nothing can merit God's attention in any absolute sense since this would deny his freedom. Consequently, the work of redemption is not carried on by the rigor of justice, but by the gracious work of acceptance as if it were rigorously just. Fundamentally, this creates a fictional justification since there is no real sense in which man is justified except by God's gracious estimation. Consequently, any talk of merit in Limborch's system is not rigorously true, but is a matter of gracious acceptance. Therefore, there is no real ground of salvation except the will of God itself.

In an inferior sense, however, (that is, what God has determined he will accept) the death of Christ and human faith stand on equal footing. The death of Christ opens the way, but human faith actually obtains the remission of sins as a real cause or ground. It merits the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness in that God accepts our faith as perfect righteousness just as Christ opened the way when God accepted his sacrifice as something it was not. This destroys the distinction between the ground of grace and the appropriation of grace so essential to Arminius' system of grace. This betrays a fundamental difference in the way the two theologians approach the act of faith.

Chapter VI

The Appropriation of Grace in Philip van Limborch

The previous chapter detailed Limborch's understanding of how God's grace towards man was secured in the death of Jesus. It also noted that man must respond to God in faith and repentance in order to appropriate that grace. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the framework and nature of that response. Limborch's concept of covenant defines its nature. His basic affirmation is that grace is appropriated by an obedient faith. The nature and content of that faithful obedience is the subject of this chapter.

The New Covenant

Limborch's *Theologia* is divided into seven books. Listed in order they are: *De sacriptura sacra*, *De Deo & operibus divinis*, *De redemptione*, *De praedestinatione Dei*, *De praeceptis novi foederis*, *De promissis & minis novi foederis*, and *De ecclesia Jesu Christi*. He devotes two books to the explicit subject of the new covenant. This indicates the importance of the covenantal structure to his system. In fact, the length of these two books alone is comparable to the rest of the *Theologia*. In it, Books I-IV, VII cover 479 pages while books V and VI cover 363 pages.

It is within the new covenant that God acts to save man and by which man appropriates this salvation. The two books on the covenant deal with man's responsibility (V) and God's promises and threats (VI). For Limborch, a covenant is what God promises man if he carries out the conditions of the covenant. There is God's part and man's part in the accomplishment of personal redemption. While commenting on the two senses in which man may be said to be reconciled to God (that is, before faith and after faith), Limborch gives this breakdown of the covenantal structure:⁵¹⁰

Considered in the former sense it consists in this: God, being placated by the death of Christ, enacted a new covenant with man in which he is ready to bestow the remission of all sins and eternal life upon all men who believe in Christ and live by the precepts he has instituted, that is, observe the conditions of the new covenant; and in the interim while he sees to the announcement of that word of grace, he tolerates them and grants them a longer time for repentance...Considered in the later sense, it consists in the application of full remission by which the remission obtained for all men is specifically applied to those who believe and perform their duty, and their sins are actually blotted out, so that they might attain eternal life.

⁵¹⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxiii, 4: Priore modo considerata in eo consistit, quod Deus morte Christi placatus novum cum hominibus foedus erexerit, in quo paratus est omnibus hominibus omnium peccatorum remissionem ac vitam aeternam largiri, modo in Christum credant, vitamque ex praescripto ipsius instituant, hoc est, Novi Foederis condiciones observent: & interea dum verbum illud gratiae annuntiari curat, eos longanimiter tolerat, tempusque resipiscentiae concedit...Posteriore modo considerate, consistit in plena remissionis applicatione, qua fidelibus ac officium suum facientibus remissio pro omnibus impetrata speciatim applicatur, ipsorumque peccata actu delentur, ut consequantur vitam aeternam.

Limborch, therefore, argues that Christ has procured grace for all men in the sense that a new covenant has been established through which all men might receive the remission of sins by faith and obedience. God has done his part. Salvation is possible for all men on the basis of the new covenant. But the reception of the specific blessings is conditioned upon faith in the mediator of that covenant, and obedience to its precepts. Consequently, the "way of salvation is opened" to all men, and sufficient grace has been given so that they will actually attain eternal life if they do not reject or disobey the covenant.⁵¹¹ God, then, has reconciled himself to us through the death of Christ only in an "imperfect" sense, that is, God has been propitiated. However, the fuller sense of reconciliation, or the most "perfect," is not obtained except upon faith and repentance (that is, the fulfilling of the conditions of the new covenant).⁵¹² It is, then, within the new covenant that the full remission of sins is proffered, and it is obtained upon obedience to the precepts of the new covenant. God offers and man accepts by the obedience of faith.

The Old and New Covenants

Through Christ, God established a new covenant in which the full remission of sins could be obtained. To understand the importance of this covenant, it is necessary to compare it with the other covenants through which God worked according to Limborch's interpretation. It is important to understand the foundation of God's covenantal relationship with man and the differences between the successive covenants in which God has worked. With this perspective, an understanding of the nature of the new covenant as the framework for the appropriation of redemption is possible.⁵¹³

Natural Religion. God did not make a covenant with Adam. Rather, the Creator invested Adam with *integritas* by which Adam knew and obeyed the fundamental moral principles of God's Law. This "natural law" was instinctive to Adam. God only gave him one positive command in addition to this natural Law. As far as the Scripture record, only a threat was attached to it, and not a promise.⁵¹⁴ Limborch, therefore, repudiates any covenant of works in the pre-fall state. On the contrary, Adam freely obeyed that natural Law which had been instilled within him, and freely disobeyed that positive command which was given him.

After the fall of Adam, this natural Law remained intact though man had lost the original investiture of *integritas*. Instead of *integritas*, man in the fallen state is born with an inclination to sin. Since natural Law alone is incapable of suppressing this inclination,

⁵¹¹ Ibid., III, xxiii, 10: Quoniam pro omnibus, pro quibus mortuus est, obtinuit eum remissionis gradum, ut via ad salutem ipsis aperta sit, gratiaque ad salutem obtinendum concessa, quam si non respuant revera per Christum salutem consequentur.

⁵¹² Ibid., III, xxiii, 13: Actu itaque nos reconciliavit ipsa sua morte, sed imperfectiore illo reconciliationis gradu: Accedente fide ac resipiscentia nostra perfectissime nos reconciliat, & in vitam aeternam introducit.

⁵¹³ Muller, "Federal Motif," pp. 102-122, has laid the groundwork for this section. He gives an overview of Limborch's concept of the covenant in comparison with Arminius and Episcopius.

⁵¹⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, ii, 9: Lex naturalis illi stimulus fuit ac instinctus naturalis faciendi ea, quae illi consentanea sunt. Nullius alterius legis Scriptura mentionem facit. One reason why Limborch rejects a covenant with Adam is because there was no explicit promise of any blessing to Adam if he obeyed.

sin increased from Adam to Abraham. The reason for the impotence of the Law was not something intrinsic to the Law itself, but man's destitution. Man no longer possessed *integritas*. In particular, since man was not aware of the "clear promises of divine grace" which are now revealed in the gospel, natural Law was unable to restrain the power of sin.⁵¹⁵ Consequently, while "natural law, or the light of right reason" is sufficient to lead men in a godly life or to a knowledge of God, sin's dominion is inextinguishable on the basis of natural Law or right reason alone.⁵¹⁶

However, God did not simply leave man to himself during this period of "natural religion" (*religionem naturalem*) from Adam to Moses. While there was no redemptive covenant between God and man, God did display "signs of grace" (*gratiae suae indicia*) among men in order to influence them to love good and hate evil. God "demonstrated" (*demonstravit*) by these signs that he rewards those who seek him and punishes those who sin. God produced such signs in three ways: (1) general admonitions and precepts; (2) promises and threats; and (3) examples of rewarded believers and punished sinners.⁵¹⁷ However, even these manifestations of God's grace were unable to restrain sin's power and dominion.

Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Due to the man's condition, God chose one family unto whom he would show special grace by preserving true worship and sending the redeemer through it. God entered into a covenant with Abraham and his family in order to express this grace.⁵¹⁸ It is Limborch's description of the Abrahamic covenant in which we first see the components of a covenant in his system. A covenant consists of two parts: precepts as conditions, and the promises and threats conditioned on an obedient response.

According to this Remonstrant theologian, the Abrahamic covenant was conditional. God would grant Abraham his promises only if he complied with three conditions: (1) to leave his father's land; (2) that he would walk before God and be perfect; and (3) that he circumcise his offspring.⁵¹⁹ Abraham's obedience was required before God would grant him the promises of the covenant which were: (1) the land of Canaan; (2) multiplication of his seed; (3) his seed would bless all nations; and (4) that God would be his shield and reward.⁵²⁰ Abraham, of course, obeyed God and these promises were granted in both their literal and spiritual forms.

While the Abrahamic covenant could not restrain sin fully, it was better than no covenant. It was insufficient to overcome the power and dominion of sin much like

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., III, vi, 1: Neque ullum, quo peccati vis in ordinem cogeret, satis validum fuit atque efficax remedium: Quia destituti erant homines clara gratiae divinae promissione atque exhibitione, quae nunc per Redemptorem Jesum Chrsitum manifestata est, 2 Tim. I.9.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., III, vi, 2: Voluit Deus superesse legem naturae, seu rectae rationis lucem, quae discrimen inter honestum ac turpe dictaret, & actionum humanarum regula foret. Verum licet illa in se sufficiens effect ad hominem dirigendum, tamen ad peccati dominium exstinguendum plane invalida fuit. In another place, Limborch refers to this "natural law" as inscribed upon the hearts of men (I, i, 8): Religio autem, vel est naturalis, vel revelata. Naturalis nititur dictamine rectae rationis a Deo cordibus hominum inscriptae, per quam homo in Dei cognitionem deducitur.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., III, vi, 3-6.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., III, vii, 1.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., III, vii, 5.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., III, vii, 6.

natural religion was. Yet, members of this covenant were benefited in two ways: (1) they had a clear and explicit rule of living which contained specific precepts; and (2) they had a greater and more certain hope of reward. This does not mean that those outside of the Abrahamic covenant were outside of God's grace, or had no hope of eternal life. They were not excluded from attaining salvation by their exclusion from the Abrahamic covenant. On the contrary, those who lived according to the Law of nature would obtain salvation for the sake of Jesus Christ. Thus, the difference between natural religion and the Abrahamic covenant was one of degree, not kind. The Abrahamic covenant was simply more clear, more explicit and offered greater certainty.⁵²¹

The Law of Moses was simply an enlargement of the Abrahamic covenant for special purposes. It was enlarged both in respect to its precepts, and its promises and threats. There are three kinds of precepts within the Mosaic legislation: (1) moral, (2) ceremonial, and (3) political. The moral Law had always been in existence--it is the natural Law of creation, but now it is made more explicit than previously. The ceremonial precepts were specifically typical of Christ and the political precepts were nationalistic. Within in this covenant, man's duty to God was more clearly revealed than it had been previously. Further, the added promises of the Mosaic covenant were basically two: (1) Messianic, the typical goal of the ceremonial precepts; and (2) the happiness of the Israelite people, both politically and individually.⁵²²

However, the law of Moses was spiritually "ineffectual" (*inefficacia*). It could not effect true spirituality in men, that is, it was insufficient for justification.⁵²³ Limborch thinks this is clear with regard to the political and ceremonial precepts of the law. Neither of these observances had any internal efficacy (*per se vis*) for the effecting of true piety or spirituality.⁵²⁴ The moral precepts were also ineffectual because they could not free man from either the guilt or the power of sin. It could not provide the remission of sins. The Law did not expiate sin because the blood of animals was not a sufficient propitiation of God's wrath on governmental principles. Grace did not function within the Law because the Law simply prescribes duties and punishments. Forgiveness belongs to grace, not Law.⁵²⁵ Further, the Mosaic Law's exposition of moral Law provided insufficient power to overcome the dominion of sin. On the contrary, the Law, in Limborch's view, excited the concupiscence of sin.⁵²⁶

Therefore, no one can be justified by the Law of Moses. It is incapable of justifying because it has no provision of grace for the sins which are committed. It could justify if man were perfect, but since he is "addicted to the carnality of concupiscence" (*carnalibus concupiscentis addicti*), man does sin.⁵²⁷ The Law provides no remedy for that situation since it has no true grace without Christ. The Law of itself, then, cannot justify the sinner. It is important to understand that when Limborch speaks of this impossibility he is referring to the Law "strictly" considered. According to Limborch,

⁵²¹ Ibid., III, vii, 10-15.

⁵²² Ibid., III, viii.

⁵²³ Ibid., III, ix, 1.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., III, ix, 13.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., III, ix, 14: *Legis enim tantum est officium praescribere, & transgressoribus denuntiare poenam: culpam autem dimittere, & a poena absolvere non est Legis, sed gratiae.*

⁵²⁶ Ibid., III, ix, 16: *ut peccati concupiscentiam vehementius excitarit.*

⁵²⁷ Ibid., III, ix, 17.

there are two senses in which one may take the concept of Law: one refers to strict adherence to its terms and the other to "less strictness" (*minus stricte*).⁵²⁸ The former sense views the Law rigidly or strictly. In this sense Law "prescribes a perpetual obedience without interruption, without any violation of precept." Consequently, no one can be justified by the Law in this sense because no one except Jesus himself has obeyed the Law perfectly.⁵²⁹

The latter sense views the Law less rigidly or strictly. It is in this sense that God grants blessings in his grace without the strictness of Law. God blesses men under (*sub*) the Law, but not out of (*ex*) or by the force of (*vis*) of the Law.⁵³⁰ It was by this means that the Jews could obtain temporal and spiritual blessings. Consequently, the Jews could be justified under the Law, but not by the Law. However, the origin of this grace is Jesus Christ as fore shadowed and typified in the sacrifices of the old covenant. They were justified under Law in the sense that the propitiation offered by Christ procured God's judgment of them in a less strict manner than the Law required. Limborch states his position in this manner:⁵³¹

Secondly, therefore, the less strictly accepted Law grants eternal life and the full remission of sins by sincere obedience in the ultimate mystical intention of God, that is, not clearly revealed, but expressed by general words, or shadowy types and figures. Consequently, the Law thus considered does not differ from the Gospel except as clear reason and less clear revelation. For the Law hides under figures and enigmas what the Gospel clearly displays by explicit words.

Thus, David was justified under the Law of Moses by sincere obedience to the conditions of that covenant which were conceived less strictly (*minus stricte*) on the basis of the Law's typical relationship to Christ. As a result, David was justified under the Law, but not by the force of the Law strictly accepted. He was justified, then, "by grace" rather than "by law." Without Christ, the Law demands strictness, but in view of its typical relationship to Christ, the Law may be graciously lessened in its rigidity.⁵³²

⁵²⁸ Ibid., III, ix, 20.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., III, ix, 20: Lex stricte accepta, solummodo tanquam lex, praescribit perpetuam obedientiam sine ulla ulliusve pracepti violatione.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., III, ix, 19.

⁵³¹ Ibid., III, ix, 22: Secundo ergo Lex minus stricte accipitur secundum ultimam, sed mysticam intentionem Dei, id est, non clare revelatam, sed verbis generalibus expressam, aut typis ac figuris adumbratam, de vita aeterna ac plena peccatorum remissione sincere obedientibus danda. Ita considerata Lex, non differt ab Euangelio nisi ratione clarioris & minus clarae revelationis: Quod enim Lex sub figuris ac aenigmatibus quibusdam abscondit, Euangelium verbis express clare proponit. Atque hac ratione potuisset Lex, licet difficulter, praestari, si clare proposita suisset: Nunc autem, quia gratiam hanc obscuris umbris involvit, & minus tantum conspiciendam praebet, praestari non potuit, neque ob eam non praestitam, homines rei peragi maledictionis, licet per eam ex miseria cui obnoxii erant liberari non potuerint.

⁵³² Ibid., III, ix, 23: Credere nos, omnes, quotquot Deum ex toto corde suo quaesiverunt, etiam verae justificationis ac salutis aeternae esse participes, non ex vi Legis, sed per gratiam promissam in Christo, & figuris typisque Veteris Testamenti adumbratam...Ac proinde Legem absque Christo nihil potuisse ad perfectam justificationem conferre. His heading for paragraph 23 is: Sub Lege quidem justificat, sed non per Legem.

Therefore, those who lived under the Law of Moses may be justified by sincere obedience to the conditions of that covenant.

Summary. Neither natural religion, nor the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were effectual in delivering man from the guilt and power of sin. This is only accomplished in the new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ. However, those who lived under these different covenants and circumstances were, for the sake of Christ, justified on the condition of sincere obedience to the precepts under which they lived. While the moral (natural) Law remained intact throughout, the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants required further precepts (positive laws) to test man's obedience (such as, the offering of Isaac for Abraham and the feasts for Moses). Those who sincerely obeyed were justified because Christ was offered as a propitiatory sacrifice that permitted a less rigid application of the Law to man's condition.

The Law of Faith

Limborch maintains that the Mosaic Law is no longer in force for Christians.⁵³³ The Law was a schoolmaster only until the death of Christ, and then it ceased to function as a covenant between God and man. Since it fulfilled its office of types and shadows, it was no longer in force when its typological goal was realized. Consequently, the Mosaic Law, as a covenant between God and man, has not been operative since the coming of Christ.⁵³⁴ This does not mean, however, that the moral Law is no longer operative, but that the moral Law as part and parcel of the Mosaic Law is no longer operative. Whatever is universal to all covenants is incorporated into the Gospel. This includes the moral (or natural) law which was also part of the Mosaic Law though less clearly revealed than in the Gospel. Thus, Muller is correct when he states that, according to Limborch, "the *lex Mosaica*, in its ethical and apodictic principles, is not set aside but included, subsumed, augmented, perfected."⁵³⁵ The same may be said of natural religion and the Abrahamic covenant. Yet, the precepts of the moral Law are obeyed because they are within the new

⁵³³ Limborch to Locke, on December 2, 1694 in De Beer, Correspondance of John Locke, no. 1823. While witnessing to a young Jewish lady Limborch argues that "we must have regard only to those things which Scripture in various places inculcates as the object of saving faith. And as for the dogmas, the proof of which must be sought not from the Old but from the New Testament, a discussion with a Jew ought not to start from them."

⁵³⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xi, 25: Non enim dicit, Legem semper paedagogi munus debere obire; sed tempus praeteritum ante natum Christum respicit, eoque munere isto functam docet; & praecipue ratione ceremoniarum, Christi typorum, & ratione gratiae imperfectioris, quae ipsos docebat perfectiorem quaerere, in solo Christo inveniendam.

⁵³⁵ Muller, "The Federal Motif," p. 120. Cf. Limborch to Locke, December 2, 1694 in De Beer, The Correspondance of John Locke, no. 1823: "After this digression I resumed my former discourse and showed that the Lord Jesus had not, properly speaking, abrogated the Law of Moses, but had brought in a more perfect law which presupposes that the Law of Moses is divine, but in whose presence all the imperfections of the Mosaic Law must needs vanish. Here I set out at sufficient length my opinion about the freedom of Christians from the Law of Moses. I also showed in what sense the Law is called eternal and how the Lord Jesus in announcing a more perfect law, in whose presence the Law of Moses has vanished, taught in accordance with the oracles of the Prophet."

covenant (not because they are present in the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants), and the perfected aspects of each covenant are the typological realizations.

However, there is a more fundamental issue at stake here than the differences between covenants. Limborch does not maintain a contrast between Law and Gospel. Certainly he contrasts the Mosaic Law and the Gospel, but he does not contrast Law *per se* (as a principle) and Gospel. It is erroneous to suppose, according to this Remonstrant theologian, that the Gospel contains no Law as if only the Law prescribes and the Gospel promises blessings.⁵³⁶ The Gospel, according to Limborch, contains both precepts and promises (hence, the titles of books V and VI). The Gospel threatens sinners with punishment and it promises the remission of sins to penitent believers. The Mosaic Law is unnecessary for the threatening of the sinner since Christ's Gospel has even graver threats than the Mosaic law had, that is, eternal hell.⁵³⁷ The new covenant, therefore, contains its own precepts, and threats and promises just as the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants had their own. The new covenant is a Law, and a better one than the previous covenants.

Limborch argues that the Gospel (the new covenant) is a Law of faith. Commenting on Romans 3:27, he writes that the "law of faith" is "the gospel which prescribes faith, and the whole of gospel obedience is comprehended by the name faith."⁵³⁸ The Law of faith, therefore, justifies when its precepts are kept and obeyed. This justification, however, is not "from merit, but out of grace through faith" (*ob merita, sed e gratia per fidem*).⁵³⁹ The grace of God, made possible by the death of Christ, functions to lessen the rigorous justice of divine Law. Thus, faith is accepted as righteousness since it is the precept which God has, in his mercy, determined to accept instead of perfect obedience. God has determined to accept imperfect obedience rather than requiring perfect obedience for the sake of Christ.

Consequently, there is a continuity of principle between the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Christ. Both Laws bestow blessings based upon compliance with certain covenantal stipulations or conditions.⁵⁴⁰ The only difference is that the Mosaic Law typified the Law of Christ. Without Christ, the Mosaic Law would not be lessened in its rigor, and consequently no one under it could have been justified. But as it typified the Gospel, it could justify by the grace of Christ. This is exactly the function of the Gospel itself. The Gospel justifies because Christ has appeased God and man meets the "less strict" requirements of the Law for participation in the blessings of the new covenant. Limborch summarizes this function of the new covenant in this manner:⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xi, 25: Verum error hic alii errori ortum suum debet: quo creditur Legem solummodo praecepta, Euangelium autem mera promissa continere.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., III, xi, 25: Neque est quod Euangelium minas Legis ad peccatores terrendos in subsidium vocet; cum & suis comminationibus, iis quae in Lege exstant multo gravioribus, utpote aeternos ignis inferni cruciatus verbis disertis denuntiantibus, peccatores impenitentes satis terrere possit.

⁵³⁸ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:27: Sed per legem fidei: hoc est, per Evangelium, quod fidem praescribit, & nomine fidei totam obedientiam evangelicam comprehendit.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, ix, 18.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., III, iii, 15: Ita etiam fideles in Jesus Christum, mandatis divinis obedientes, licent non tam perfecte ut Jesus Christus, justificabuntur: non quidem absque ullo ad obedientiam ipsorum respectu, sed tamen non tam propter ipsorum obedientiam, quam quia ex Christo spiritualiter sunt

Therefore, those who believe in Jesus Christ and obey the divine commands are justified although not so perfectly as Jesus Christ; yet not without any respect to their own obedience, but not so much on account of their obedience than because they are spiritually regenerated out of Christ with respect to whose perfect obedience God is willing to accept and reward their sincere obedience, though imperfect, as perfect obedience.

In another place, Limborch further explains his standpoint:⁵⁴²

In the gospel God does not require rigid, perfect, absolute and uninterrupted obedience in order to threaten destruction and eternal damnation to all those who shall be guilty of any the least offence, but he treats us like an indulgent father, and though he does not approve the failings of the faithful, yet he is graciously pleased to forgive them to those who sincerely seek him and repent of their sins. For God under the new covenant requires repentance, and promises the remission of sins.

In principle, then, the new covenant is simply a gracious Mosaic Law. It supersedes the Mosaic law in clarity of revelation and perfects its typical aspects. Gospel and Law are a continuum rather than contrasting systems of justification. One appropriates the blessings of the new covenant by obedience to its precepts. Natural religion, the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant all functioned on this same principle. There is, therefore, in Limborch's system, no difference between the appropriation of grace under the Mosaic Law and the appropriation of grace under the Law of faith except that the precepts have changed, the precepts of the new covenant are clearer, and the work of Christ has lessened the rigor of the Law. This difference is not substantive since it is only a difference of degree, not kind. The Lutheran systematician Pieper recognized this in Limborch and argues that "Arminians" [Remonstrants] make "Christ a new Lawgiver" since their "position amounts to saying that Christ demands less by way of works than Moses to obtain salvation."⁵⁴³ The Gospel clearly reveals the relaxation of Law based upon the sacrifice of Christ while the Mosaic Law only typified this sacrifice.⁵⁴⁴

regenti; respectu cuius obedientiae perfectae Deus ipsorum obedientiam, licet imperfectam, sinceram tamen, gratiose pro perfecta acceptare vult, ipsisque perfectae obedientiae praemium imputare. See III, iii, 16: Sicut ergo fideles in Jesum Christum, licet proprie propter Christum perfecte justum justificentur, non tamen justificantur absque propria fide & obedientia, licet iustitia Christi long inferiore.

⁵⁴² Ibid., V, lxxix, 7: diximus nos Deum in Eugangelio non exigere rigidam illam, perfectam, & numeris omnibus absolutam, nulloque unquam peccato interruptam obedientiam; adeo ut exitium & damnationem aeternam commiinetur omnibus qui vel in minimo deliquerint: Sed benigni instar patris nobiscum agere, & licet lapsus fidelium suorum non approbet, eos tamen sincere ipsum quaerentibus & peccatorum poenitentiam agentibus, gratiose condonare velle. Exigit enim Deus sub Novo Foedere resipiscentiam, ac promittit remissionem peccatorum.

⁵⁴³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:339.

⁵⁴⁴ Given this principle of continuity throughout God's covenanting with man, it is understandable that Limborch maintains the possibility of man's salvation outside of any knowledge of the new covenant. A man is responsible to obey what is revealed to him. If one sincerely obeys the precepts of the natural law, though imperfectly, God will graciously account his obedience as righteousness for the sake of Christ. See Limborch, *De Veritate Religionis*, p. 191, where the new covenant

The Precept of the New Covenant

Limborch takes the whole of Book V to detail the precepts of the New Covenant. The precepts proceed either from God's natural right or his positive right. Natural precepts are those rooted in the nature of things according to God's holiness. They are the moral principles which are operative in every covenantal relationship between God and man. These principles are discernable through "right reason," but are also clearly revealed in the Gospel. The positive precepts are those which are rooted in God's own will and not command these precepts. They are commanded to test man's obedience. Limborch would place the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law in this class as well as the sacraments of the new covenant. Positive precepts are usually peculiar to individual covenants though they may be typified by precepts in earlier covenants.⁵⁴⁵

Limborch considers all the precepts within the new covenant in great detail. It is because of this detailed exposition that Limborch is often remembered as a practical theologian. However, unlike Contra-Remonstrant expositors of the moral Law, Limborch's discussion is not based upon the Decalogue. Rather, he breaks down the precepts of the new covenant into the following categories: Duty toward God, Duty toward Neighbor, Duty to Self, Official Duty and Ceremonies of the New Covenant. These are composed of both general and particular duties, internal and external duties, and moral and positive duties. However, the two general duties which encompass all of the others are two: faith and repentance. Limborch argues that New Testament obedience is chiefly indicated by the terms faith and repentance.⁵⁴⁶ He maintains that all the duties under the new covenant are summarized by these two, faith and repentance.⁵⁴⁷ It is on these two duties (and more particularly faith) that Limborch rests the appropriation of grace in his system. Consequently, it is important to understand Limborch's definition of faith.⁵⁴⁸

Limborch defines faith in this way:⁵⁴⁹

Faith in Jesus Christ is not only a knowledge and an assent by which we believe Jesus to be the Christ, the only constituted savior from God to all those who live according to the set gospel precepts, but also a confidence which we place in him as prophet, priest and king given by God to us, we

becomes a *secundum naturae legem* for those who live without knowledge of gospel revelation.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, V, i.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, V, v, 1.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, viii, 1: *Generales sunt universum hominis Christiani officium summatim comprehendunt; suntque duae, Fides in Jesum Christum, & Resipiscentia.*

⁵⁴⁸ While Limborch always conjoins faith and repentance, his system regards repentance as the equivalent of evangelical obedience. Consequently, this chapter will discuss faith first, and then will subsume the principles of repentance under the concept of obedience.

⁵⁴⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, viii, 5: *Fides in Jesum Christum non tantum est cognitio & assensus, quo credimus Jesum esse Christum, unicumque a Deo Salvatorem constitutum omnium qui ex Euangelii praescripto vitam instituunt; sed etiam fiducia, qua in ipsum ut Prophetam Sacerdotem & Regem nobis a Deo datum recumbimus, plene persuasi nos, si doctrinae eius obtemperaverimus, remissionem peccatorum vitamque aeternam per ipsum consecuturos: ex se producens serium & efficax propositum, obedientiam qualem a nobis exegit ipsi praestandi.*

are fully persuaded, if we comply with his doctrine, that we will attain through him the remission of sins and eternal life; producing of itself a serious and efficacious purpose to perform the obedience which he requires of us.

This definition of faith involves three aspects which Limborch calls the antecedent, form and consequent acts of faith. The discussion below is divided according to these three divisions.

The Antecedent of Faith

The antecedent of faith is knowledge (*scientia*).⁵⁵⁰ Faith rests (*innitor*) upon knowledge. It is so fundamental that without it faith would be shattered (*corruere*) since "no one can offer assent to an unknown object."⁵⁵¹ In light of this relationship, faith may sometimes be called "knowledge" by way of a synecdoche since knowledge is part of faith, but not the whole of it.⁵⁵²

Since knowledge forms the foundation (*fundamentum*) of faith, it is important to understand what exactly must be known before faith meets the requirements of the new covenant. Those who lived prior to the establishment of the new covenant, and those who live outside of any knowledge of the new covenant are only required to know what has been revealed to them, whether that be by the light of reason or previous incomplete revelation. What is required to be known is accommodated to the circumstances.⁵⁵³

Limborch argues that saving faith must know certain things "distinctly and in particular."⁵⁵⁴ Faith would have an empty content apart from this knowledge. Consequently, in order to have faith, one must know all that is necessary for salvation. In particular, Limborch mentions such things as God's attributes and works, the person and offices of Jesus Christ, and the promises and threats of the new covenant. However, so that the reader is certain that Limborch is not being too broad, he limits the particulars which are necessary to those of the Apostle's Creed. Only these are necessary for salvation since they constitute the particulars without which faith is not possible.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ Locke to Limborch, on May 10, 1695 in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 1091: "At last with better hopes I took in hand your *Theologia* and not without very great joy read book V, chapter VIII [*De Fide in Jesum Christum; ac primo de actu eius antecedente, Scientia*], from which I perceived that one theologian was to be found for whom I am not a heretic." Interestingly, Locke found the treatments of Calvin and Turrentin on the same subject unsatisfactory.

⁵⁵¹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, viii, 7: rei enim incognitae nemo assensum praebere potest.

⁵⁵² Ibid., V, viii, 7: Unde & per Synecdochen tota fides Scientiae nomine in Scriptura nonnunquam venit. Sic Tit. I.2...Joan. XVII.3.

⁵⁵³ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, viii, 4: Haecque fides pro variis revelationis divinae gradibus vel perfectior vel imperfectior est, & semper revelationi divinae accommodata.

⁵⁵⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, viii, 8: Nondum tamen haec fides est salutaris, nisi & omnia particularia ad salutem prorsus necessaria distincte & explicite credantur.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., V, viii, 7: Scientiae huius objectum sunt omnia ad salutem necessaria; qualia sunt Deus, attributa operaque divina, & Jesus Christus, ipsius persona ac munera, tum & praecepta, promissa, ac comminationes divinae. Non quasi omnia quae de hisce in controversiam veniunt, aut in Scholis inquiruntur, necessariis annumeremus; sed ea solummodo, sine quibus fides in Deum, & Jesum

Further, it is also necessary to know the duties of the new covenant which are required for salvation. What is necessary to know, then, cannot be determined apart from the duties which are necessary to be performed in the new covenant. The supreme duties which encompass all others are faith and repentance. What must be known for faith to live is what is summarized in the Apostle's Creed.

It is important to underline the fact that knowledge is an intellectual operation.⁵⁵⁶ Faith, however, is a volitional operation.⁵⁵⁷ Faith and repentance are the two general virtues of the will. Faith, though founded upon knowledge, is, at its root, an act of the will. There can be no faith without knowledge, but there can be knowledge without faith. The intellect may understand that Jesus is the Son of God, but until the will yields its assent to that proposition, there is no faith. Thus, knowledge is called the "antecedent act of faith," but assent (*assensus*) is called the "formal act of faith."⁵⁵⁸ Faith presupposes an act of the intellect, but completes itself, as an internal movement, by an act of the will. This act of the will is the virtue and essence of faith.

The Formal Act of Faith

Assent (*assensus*) is an act of the will. It is the means by which one yields to the conclusions of the intellect. It assents to the propositions the intellect has judged to be true, and surrenders the will to the pursuit of what the intellect knows. Thus *assensus* is intimately joined with *scientia*, but the latter needs the former in order to attain saving faith. Saving faith, then, is a "solid and firm" (*solidus & firmus*) assent to what is known. There are unacceptable kinds of assent. For instance, an assent which is produced in us "without any solid reason" is no more than an opinion. That assent is more "blind than rational obedience; more brutal impetus of the mind than a solid judgment."⁵⁵⁹ In contrast to insufficient assents, Limborch defines what a saving assent is:⁵⁶⁰

But a solid and firm assent requires a shining rational judgment of the will produced in us by a serious and accurate meditation of those things which render us fully persuaded of the certainty of the things which we are to believe.

Christum ut Salvatorem, observatio mandatorum, & promissorum fides, consistere nequit: quorum compendium admodum dilucidum nobis exhibet commune Christianorum Symbolum, vulgo dictum Apostolorum.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., V, vi, 1. For Limborch, there are two intellectual virtues: *scientia* and *prudentia*, see V, vi and vii.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., V, viii, 1.

⁵⁵⁸ The title of chapter viii of book V of *Theologia Christiana* reads: "De Fide in Jesum Christum; ac primo de actu eius antecedent, Scientia." The title of chapter ix of book V reads: "De formali Fidei actu, assensu, illique juncta Fiducia."

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., V, ix, 1: *Assensus autem quilibet non sufficit, nempe levi de causa in nobis productus, sine ulla solida ratione: ille enim, uti vidimus, magis est opinio, quam fides, magis coeca quam rationalis obedientia; magis brutus animi impetus, quam sollidum iudicium; qui sicuti levi ex causa oritur, ita etiam levi de causa interit; perinde uti de temporariis illius dicitur Matth. XIII.21.*

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., V, ix, 1: *Sed requiritur assensu solidus & firmus, nitens iudicio rationali voluntatis, in nobis producto seria & accurata meditatione illarum rerum, quae nos de certitudine rerum credendarum plene persuasos reddunt.*

Consequently, assent is produced when the will, on the basis of rational persuasion, yields to the demands of the intellect. The intellect, then, moves the will, but the will is nevertheless free to resist that movement on other grounds, such as irrationality or passion.

Knowledge is a function of the understanding, but assent is a function of the will. While the action of the understanding is necessary, the will is free to assent or not assent to what the understanding knows. Since faith involves both knowledge and assent, the act of faith may be said to be partly an act of the intellect and partly an act of the will. Limborch argues that it is "neither a mere act of the intellect, nor a mere act of the will, but a mixture, partly intellect, partly will."⁵⁶¹

The prior act is the intellectual but the formal act of faith is volitional. Both form part of the definition of faith. But the "formal act of faith" is assent since it involves a free acquiescence of the will. Faith is constituted when the will yields assent. Thus, faith is fundamentally an act of the will.⁵⁶² Assent, then, constitutes faith's internal act of obedience. The will is not passive, but active.⁵⁶³ It yields obedience to the call of the Gospel, or at least, what is known by the intellect.

When assent is given to the intellect, the immediate, internal effect of faith is assurance (*fiducia*). While this is a consequent of assent, it is to be distinguished from the "consequential act of faith" by the fact that it is an internal action "flowing immediately from" the act of the will in assenting to the knowledge of the intellect.⁵⁶⁴ The "consequential act of faith" refers to an external act which results from assent, that is, obedience. Obedience is the "immediate effect of faith," but assurance is the immediate effect of assent.⁵⁶⁵ Assurance is "nothing else except the firm assent" of one who indisputably trusts the divine promises.⁵⁶⁶ Assurance, then, is an intimate part of the internal movement of faith itself. There can be no faith without assurance, and no assurance without faith.

However, *fiducia* does not refer to the personal assurance of salvation itself, but the assurance of God's loving disposition toward man and the divine willingness to save man when he obeys. The object of *fiducia* "is the universal mercy of God" which is offered to all men on the condition of faith in Christ and obedience to the precepts of the new covenant.⁵⁶⁷ This is not the assurance that one is himself saved, but that he is saved

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., V, ix, xxii: Nos dicimus nec esse merum intellectus, nec merum voluntatis actum, sed mixtum, partim intellectus partim voluntatis.

⁵⁶² Ibid., V, xi, 6: Dicimus itaque fidem in primo suo instanti esse actum, & quidem voluntatis nostrae.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., V, xi, 4: Non hic agimus de actibus voluntatis renovatae, sed de ipsa voluntatis renovatione: ea cum in nobis peragatur sine nobis, & ad eam voluntas se habeat mere passive, non nisi absurde voluntatis nostrae actio appellari potest.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., V, ix, 24: Assensui arctissime unitur Fiducia, immediate ex ea fluens; adeo ut assensus noster recte assensus fiducialis appelletur.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., V, x, 1: Actus fidei consequens, seu potius immediatum fidei effectum, est Obedientia.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., V, ix, 24: quia nihil aliud est, nisi roboratus assensus in hominem fidelem reflexus: qui enim promissis divinis indubitato assentitur, etiam necesse est ut Deo confidat, sibi juxta promissa divina salutem obverturam.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., V, ix, 26: Objectum itaque fiduciae est misericordia divina universalis, omnibus hominibus, si in Christum credant & ex illius praescripto vitam instituant, oblata.

when he believes and obeys since God's grace is universal rather than special. Limborch contrasts this position with the special grace of the Contra-Remonstrant system. He argues that the Contra-Remonstrant position denies assurance since no one can ever be sure whether or not that special grace is promised to him. If one removes the conditions of an obedient faith and universal grace, he removes the certainty that grace is actually appropriated by an individual.⁵⁶⁸ Assurance, then, is essentially assent to the proposition that God is willing to save all men and will, in fact, bestow salvation on all those who believe and obey.⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, when one does believe and obey, he can be assured that he has appropriated the blessings of the new covenant. The problem, however, is the exact nature and content of that obedience. What is the criteria of saving obedience so that one can be sure that he has, at any point, appropriated the blessings of the new covenant? At what point does faith become saving faith? Consequently, the *fiducia* which is immediately connected with *assensus* is the assurance of possible salvation. It is not the assurance of its actual application. The latter kind of assurance is only attained when one believes and obeys, that is, when one does more than simply know and assent to certain propositions.

The Consequential Act of Faith

The immediate effect of faith is obedience. It is the consequence of faith. One who knows, assents to and is assured of the God's promises will obey so that he might attain (*consequatur*) eternal life. Obedience is necessary because it "is the virtue and efficacy of that faith, indeed, it is called the life of faith, and without it faith is ineffectual for salvation."⁵⁷⁰

There are two perspectives from which Limborch approaches this division of faith. First, he argues that one who has a firm faith will readily obey the precepts of the new covenant since his faith renders him certain of the blessings of the new covenant. Faith confers a present efficacy upon future blessings. He who believes in the promises of God fully expects to receive them as certainly as if he already possessed them. Thus, one who has a firm faith will obey the rule of the Gospel so that he may receive them. The believer is motivated by the blessing of the Gospel and obeys the precepts in order to receive them.⁵⁷¹

Second, he argues that when faith does not issue in good works faith is dead. In fact, there is no living faith until good works are present. No faith is living (saving, justifying) until it issues in good works. He states his point by contrasting living and dead faith:⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., V, ix, 25, 27.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., V, ix, 26: Eaque immediate ex assensu oritur. Quia enim fidelis assensum praebet doctrinae Jesu Christi, qua omnibus in se credentibus sibi obediens vitam aeternam pollicetur, inde reflexione ad seipsum facta confidit & sibi vitam aeternam a Christo dandam, si credat & obediat.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., V, x, 1: Et quia in obedientia illa sese fidei virtus & efficacia prodit, etiam illa fidei vita dicitur, & sine ea fides ad salutem esse inefficax.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., V, x, 3.

⁵⁷² Ibid., V, xii, 5: Fidem, phrasi Scripturae Sacrae usitata, distribuimus in Vivam, ac Mortuam: per Vivam intelligentes justificantem; per Mortuam, quae historica vocari solet. Fides viva est, quae producit bona opera, atque ita consequitur justificationem; Mortua vero, quae operibus est destituta,

We distribute faith, according to the use of phrases in Sacred Scripture, into living and dead. By living is understood justifying, by dead is understood what is usually called historical. Living faith is that which produces good works and consequently attains justification; while a dead faith is that which is destitute of good works and is consequently ineffectual for justification.

The effects of faith, then, define saving faith. The internal movements of faith are not sufficient for justification. On the contrary, faith must work in order to live and justify.

Limborch argues that "faith is called dead, not in respect of its nature, but its effects."⁵⁷³ The difference between a dead faith and a living faith is not one of nature, but of degree. All bare faith, that is, faith without works, is dead, but that faith may be real in terms of its internal movements (knowledge, assent, assurance). It is only dead in view of its effects, that is, it does not produce good works which then, in turn, effect justification.⁵⁷⁴ Limborch offers the example of Abraham who had true faith before he offered Isaac (*fides vera...ante opera*), but was not justified apart from that work. Even the demons have true faith in the sense that it is not disguised and it is a firm assent (*non fucata fides est, & assensus firmus*), but it did not produce good works and therefore did not effect their salvation.⁵⁷⁵

Thus, while faith exists apart from good works, it is not saving or justifying faith. The internal acts of faith may be complete and true without any good works. One may know that the proposition "Jesus is the Christ" to be true, he may assent to it and be assured of it without any good works. That individual has faith, but he is not justified. He even has a true faith in terms of its internal nature. However, there is no saving faith (no efficacious faith) without good works. Consequently, in one sense a man possesses faith without works, but in another sense he does not possess faith without works. In the former sense he has a dead faith, but in the latter sense it is living. Thus, Limborch's meaning is clear when he states that "works are the cause of a living faith."⁵⁷⁶ External obedience renders the internal faith efficacious. No faith is justifying until it externalizes itself in a good work.

The Nature of Justifying Faith

Faith is a "free act of obedience,"⁵⁷⁷ and its consequent good works render it a living faith. The question which concerns this section is the exact nature of this living

ac proinde ad justificationem inefficax.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., V, xii, 6: Fides vocatur mortua, non respectu naturae suae, sed effectus

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., V, xii, 6: Nos autem utramque veram esse fidem statuimus, sed gradibus tantum differere, ac discrimen inter utramque ex utriusque effectis petendum esse: Itaque omnem fidem in se nude spectatam esse mortuam, & vitam accipere ab operibus; esse tamen ante bonorum operum productionem veram ac bonam.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., V, xii, 6.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., V, xii, 6: etiam opera causa sunt vitae fidei.

⁵⁷⁷ V, xi, 8: quod sit liber obedientiae actus. See also VI, iv, 30: Fides autem ipsa est obedientiae nostrae, quem Deus nobis praescribit, & quem liberrime Deo praestamus, quique obedientiam omnium Dei praeceptorum ex se producit, and *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 4:5: Quin & ipsa fides, qua Deo se revelanti credimus, eximum obedientiae nostrae opus est.

faith which justifies. Limborch rejects the Reformation doctrine that "faith alone" justifies. Instead, he argues that faith justifies because it obeys.

Justification by Works, Not By Faith Alone

Commenting on Romans 4:5, Limborch argues that Paul and James are in complete harmony since Paul's definition of faith involved the good works of which James spoke. He argues that Romans 4 and James 2 teach that:⁵⁷⁸

Abraham was not only justified out of faith, but out of works, certainly those which were born of Abraham's faith. Works together with faith itself result in justification which is also confirmed by the further example of Rachel to show that a faith living by good works is required for justification rather than a dead faith which is devoid of works. Thus, James thoroughly agrees with Paul. Paul, against the Jews who seek righteousness out of the law which demands a fully perfect works-righteousness, teaches that man is justified not by works of the law, but by faith, and by faith is understood the whole of Christian obedience which flows from faith just as elsewhere it requires faith working through love (Gal 5:6), a new creation (Gal 6:15), and observing the commands of God (1 Cor 7:29). James, however, against pseudo-Christians, many glorying in their own faith but who do not make works agree with faith, shows that faith to be dead, and consequently insufficient for justification, but shows that a faith living through good works is required. Works together with faith result in justification.

There are several key statements in this harmonization of James and Paul. First, Limborch affirms that when Paul used the term "faith" he implied the whole of gospel obedience under that single term. Thus, wherever one reads "faith" in Paul, he must also read "obedience." Second, Limborch implicitly excluded the concept of merit by contrasting the righteousness of the Law with righteousness of the Gospel. Gospel justification does not come by perfect obedience, but by gracious imputation. Third, it is clear that Limborch considers "good works" as a necessary condition of justification. Twice he affirms that good works and faith result in justification. Faith and good works "run together" (*concurrere*) to produce justification.

⁵⁷⁸ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 4:5: Hic & Jacobus cap II. pluribus docet, Abrahamum non tantum ex fide, sed ex operibus, illis nempe, quae fidei Abrahami fructus erant, esse justificatum; & opera una cum fide ipsius concurrere ad justificationem: quod & porro exemplo Rachabae confirmat: Ut ostendat, non fidem mortuam, sue operibus vacuam, sed vivam per bona opera, ad justificationem requiri. Et sic Jacobus optime cum Paulo consentit. Paulus contra Judaeos justitiam ex lege quae omni modo perfectam, sue justitiam operum exigit, quaerentes, docet hominem justificari non operibus legis, sed fide: per fidem intelligens totam obedientiam Christianam, quae ex fide fluit; quemadmodum alibi requirit fidem per charitatem operantem, Gal. V.6. novam creaturam, VI.15. & observationem mandatorum Dei, I Cor. VII.29. Jacobus autem, contra pseudo-Christianos, multum de fide sua gloriantes, operat autem fidei consentanea non facientis, ostendit fidem illam esse mortuam, ac proinde ad justificationem non sufficere; sed requiri fidem per opera bona vivam; eaque opera una cum fide ad justificationem concurrere.

Biblical Faith as Obedience. Limborch argues that the Pauline definition of faith "is not mere assent, nor bare assurance, but includes within itself all obedience to the commands commissioned by the precepts of the Gospel."⁵⁷⁹ Justifying faith, therefore, stands for Gospel obedience in Paul, and in Scripture as a whole. In Rom 1:5 and 16:26, "obedience" is a synonym for personal faith while the term "faith" refers to the Law of Christ itself. It is obedience to the new covenant which justifies.⁵⁸⁰

Limborch offers several arguments to establish his case. First, he admits that sometimes "faith alone" is said to be the means of justification (Acts 13:38,39; Rom 4:5; 5:1; Gal 2:16), but he also argues that "works" are sometimes said to be the means of justification (Gal 5:6; Jas 2:24; 1 John 3:7). Second, he argues that the remission of sins is sometimes ascribed to works rather than bare faith (as in Matt 6:14,15; Acts 3:19; Luke 24:47). Third, unbelief is represented in Scripture under the figure of disobedience or evil works (John 3:19, 20, 21; Rom 2:8). Thus, the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone "includes the whole of Gospel obedience."⁵⁸¹

Limborch does not, then, believe in the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. He explicitly states that "not only faith, but other virtues which flow from faith" are required for justification.⁵⁸² Indeed, he charges the Reformation doctrine of faith alone with damning consequences as it implies that no good works are necessary since the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer.⁵⁸³

However, Limborch does not object to the phrase "faith alone" if it is properly understood as including Gospel obedience. Salvation is attributed to "faith alone" in some passages (cf. Acts 15:9; 16:31).⁵⁸⁴ However, when faith does stand alone it "includes" the whole of Gospel obedience, or at least, the other "conditions" prescribed in the Gospel.⁵⁸⁵ Therefore, justifying faith not only involves the internal acts of faith (knowledge, assent,

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., cv. Romans 3:25: Haec autem fides non est merus assensus, aut nuda fiducia; sed in se includit obedientiam omnium mandatorum lege Evangelio praescriptorum: quod quia maxime ad totius huius epistolae intelligentiam momenti est, id hic Paulo distinctius adstruere operae pretium est. See also *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 37: Inde apparet, per fidem hisce operibus oppositam, non intelligendam esse nudam fidem, contradistincte ab operibus quae fides producit; sed una cum fide omnem illam obedientiam quam Deus in Novo Foedere praescribit, quaeque per fidem in Jesum Christum praestatur.

⁵⁸⁰ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 1:5, 16:26 and Acts 6:7.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., cv. Romans 3:25: Ex quibus omnibus satis liquet, quando per fidem justificati dicimur, totam illi obedientiam Evangelicam includi. In *Theologia Christiana*, V, iv, 43, Limborch offers a series of similar arguments. The point of them is to demonstrate that works are not excluded from justification (*opera autem a Justificatione non excludi*).

⁵⁸² Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 4: Nos ultro agnoscimus, ad Justificationem etiam requiri, non tantum fidem, sed & alias virtutes ex fide profluentes, quas illi dispositiones bonas solent vocare.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., V, lxxviii, 11.

⁵⁸⁴ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:25. See also *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 33-35. In VI, iv, 35, Limborch states: fidem quippe solam nos justificare.

⁵⁸⁵ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 1:17: quae fides omnium praeceptorum ipsius obedientiam producit, quae una hic cum fide includitur, & passim in hac epistola, ut in seqq. plenius probaturi sumus. Also cv. Acts 16:33: Sed eadem hic, rationem domus ipsius, includitur conditio, quae ipsi, ut salvus fit, praescribitur, nempe, ut credant in Dominum Jesum.

assurance), but also involves external acts of obedience. There is no justification apart from these external acts of faith.

Biblical Faith excludes Merit. Limborch is sensitive to the charge that his doctrine of justification by faith and works involves some kind of meritorious obedience on the part of man. According to Limborch, there is a sense in which man's obedience is meritorious and a sense in which it is not. He argues that if the term "merit" is not taken in a rigid sense, there is a sense in which the good works of men are meritorious because God does prescribe certain requirements as conditions for receiving the remission of sins. Good works are meritorious only in the sense that they are fulfillments of the conditions of the covenant, and not because they are within themselves righteous according to the rigidness of divine law.⁵⁸⁶

However, Limborch denies that faith is either the "efficient" or "meritorious cause" of justification. The former belongs to the judicial act of God, and "faith excludes merit."⁵⁸⁷ The "efficient" cause of justification is God's forensic judgment to impute righteousness to man on the condition of faith. Limborch stresses this judicial act on the part of God as the ground of salvation itself since it expresses God's merciful intention to accept faith as righteousness for the sake of Christ.⁵⁸⁸ Faith excludes merit on the ground of God's gracious imputation. Faith does not earn righteousness in the sense of inherent possession of perfection. Rather, faith is simply the condition upon which God graciously accounts the obedience of faith, though it is inherently imperfect, as perfect righteousness for the sake of Christ.⁵⁸⁹

The works of faith, then, are not meritorious because they are not accepted according to the rigor of divine justice (*non rigori justitiae*), but according to the merciful estimation of God.⁵⁹⁰ There is nothing in faith that demands that God impute righteousness to the believer except as God has graciously set forth faith as the condition upon which he will forensically impute righteousness to him. Faith, then, does not give anyone a ground of boasting anymore than it gives a beggar grounds for boasting that he deserved the gift which a benefactor has just given him.

When Paul excludes works from the mode of justification, Limborch thinks he is excluding the works of the Law of Moses. At the very beginning of his commentary on Romans, he cautions the reader that when Paul uses the term *opera* in contrast to *fides* the apostle is simply referring to the works of the Law of Moses and not to evangelical obedience.⁵⁹¹ Limborch is willing to expand this to a Law principle of perfect obedience,

⁵⁸⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, lxxviii, 12: Si itaque Meritum aliud non significet, nisi conditionem necessariam vitam aeternam obtinendi, & ad cuius praesentiam Deus vitam aeternam ut conditionis a se stipulatae praemium largiturus est, concedimus bona opera Merita posse vocari.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., V, xi, 10: Non enim fides justificationem, utpote quae internus ac judicialis Dei actus est, tanquam causa efficiens producit; nece etiam causa meritoria est justificationis; fides enim meritum excludit.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., VI, iv, 31.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., V, xi, 10: Fides itaque alio sensu hic concipi nequit, nisi conditio a Deo nobis praescripta ut justificationem consequamur, non vi aut merito suo: fides enim, uti vidimus meritum excludit: sed ex gratiosa Dei promissione, qua fidem nobis in justitiam propter Christum imputationem vult.

⁵⁹⁰ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:25; also cv. Romans 6:23.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., cv. Romans 1:17: Ergo non justificatur per opera, stricte accepta, ut passim in hac Epistola Opera, seu Opera Legis accipiuntur; sed per fidem in Jesum Christum, quae in Evangelio revelata

but usually understands it simply in reference to the Law of Moses.⁵⁹² In particular, he sees two things excluded by Paul's denial of justification by works. Paul excludes the works of the ceremonial Law (such as circumcision, Levitical sacrifices) and the "mode of obedience demanded under the law, that is, a perfect and sinless uninterrupted obedience."⁵⁹³ Under Christ, one is justified by neither the ceremonial Law of Moses nor by perfect obedience. The former because it is abrogated in Christ, and the latter because justification would be bestowed by debt rather than grace.

Justification, then, is by faith alone in distinction from the Law of Moses. One does not receive justification by works of merit, but by works of faith (evangelical obedience). Man is now under a new covenant in which God graciously accepts man's imperfect faith as if it were perfect obedience.⁵⁹⁴

Biblical Faith as Condition. God has established a new covenant on the basis of the propitiatory death of Christ. This demands the obedience of faith as the necessary condition of justification. The new covenant is a "law of faith" as opposed to a "law of works."⁵⁹⁵ This means that under the new covenant God demands an imperfect obedience rather than a perfect obedience for justification for the sake of Christ.

Imperfect faith (imperfect obedience), then, is the condition of justification under the new covenant. Limborch constantly stresses the conditional nature of the covenant throughout his system. The importance of this conditional nature of the covenant is clear from this comment in which Limborch is reacting to the Contra-Remonstrant doctrine of unconditional election:⁵⁹⁶

For such an absolute decree is repugnant to the requiring of faith and repentance as necessary terms of salvation, and the requiring of faith and repentance overthrows this absolute decree. For God by exacting faith and obedience, as a necessary duty for obtaining eternal life, has made it the condition of salvation, as he has infidelity and obstinacy the condition of suffering damnation.

est.

⁵⁹² Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 34.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., VI, iv, 36: Per opera legis intelligit, aut opera legis ceremonialia, quae iam abrogata sunt nihilque amplius coram Deo valent, juxta I Cor. VIII.19...Vel intelligendus est modus obediendi qualis in Lege exigebatur, id est, perfecta nulloque peccato interrupta obedientia; Galat. III.10. See also *Commentarius*, cv. Romans 3:23: non ergo operum merito ex rigore legis justificari possunt.

⁵⁹⁴ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 31: Est itaque talis actus, qui licet in se spectatus perfectus nequaquam sit, sed in multis deficiens; tamen a Deo, gratiosa & liberrima voluntate pro pleno & perfecto acceptatur, & propter quem Deus homini gratiose remissionem peccatorum & vitae aeternae praemium conferre vult. This is a matter of grace, not merit

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., VI, iv, 37: sed una cum fide omnem illam obedientiam quam Deus in Novo Foedere praescribit, quaeque per fidem in Jesum Christum praestatur...exigit obedientiam fidei (vocatur enim lex fidei, Rom. III.27.).

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., IV, ii, 5: tam enim decretum eiusmodi absolutum evertit exactionem fidei & resipiscentiae, tanquam officii praestationem, ad obtinendum salutem necessariam; quam fidei & resipiscentiae exactio eiusmodi absolutum decretum evertit. Deus enim fidem & obedientiam exigendo, ut officium necessarium ad obtinendum vitam aeternam, eam constituit conditionem salutis obtinendae; infidelitatem & contumaciam ut conditionem damnationis subeundae.

This view of conditionality implies that man still lives under a legal principle. Certainly, the severity of the Law is lessened, and it is not rigidly applied, but the principle remains the same. Limborch has not laid aside the legal principle of justification, but simply weakened its requirements. It is a Law of imperfect obedience (a Law of faith) instead of a Law of perfect of obedience (a Law of works). Thus, under this conditionality man actually renders to God an obedience which is acceptable to him. Man renders to God a righteous act on the basis of which he then accounts man righteous in conjunction with the work of Christ. Dabney correctly observed that this obedience is meritorious in that it is "rendered as a matter of righteousness before God."⁵⁹⁷ To be sure, this acceptance is rooted in grace. It is graciously accepted. It is not judged by the rigor of the law. But nevertheless this obedience is accepted according to a legal principle. The requirements are not as strict, but they remain as righteousness to be worked and counted.

The Problem of Justifying Faith

Any system which affirms that good works produce or result in justification has several internal questions to answer. According to Limborch, only a faith that is living and efficacious through (per) good works is sufficient for justification.⁵⁹⁸ Faith justifies only when it produces good works; only when it obeys. There is no justification "before any act of repentance."⁵⁹⁹

Given such a system, three important questions should be raised: (1) at what point is one justified?, (2) how does one maintain the state of justification?, and (3) how can one be sure that he is justified?

The Point of Justification. Since good works are required for justification, at what point, or at what work, is one actually justified in God's sight? It is surprising that Limborch never directly answers this question. It would seem to be a question of paramount importance. How many obedient acts must be performed before justification is received, or is an initial and specific act of obedience alone sufficient for God to declare a man righteous? Which good works are necessary for justification and which are not? Limborch does not, at any point, attempt to deal with these precise questions. Rather, it appears that he assumes that one is justified when he obeys any precept of the new covenant out of a sincere faith. However, given Limborch's covenantal framework, it is possible to particularize what obedient act is necessary to secure, or at least assure, justification.

Limborch maintains that the moral Law has been a constant obligation of God's covenants. Adam by virtue of his *integratis* observed that Law perfectly. Adam fell when he disobeyed the only positive injunction God had given him, namely, not to eat of a specific tree in the garden. This was God's method of testing his free obedience--whether or not Adam would do a thing simply because God told him to do it. Likewise, God tested Abraham by giving a positive command (i.e., circumcision) and occasionally testing his obedience in addition to or even contrary to the moral Law (i.e., the sacrifice

⁵⁹⁷ R. L. Dabney, *Systematic and Polemic Theology*, 6th ed. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927), p. 637.

⁵⁹⁸ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 40: *Jacobus docet, fidem non solam, operibus bonis vacuam, justificare; sed per bona opera vivam & efficacem.*

⁵⁹⁹ Limborch to Locke, on March 16, 1697 in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 2222.

of Isaac). The moral Law was taken up into the Mosaic Covenant, but there were a number of positive commands added to it (such as the ceremonial laws). Just as Abraham sought justification in these positive works of obedience (such as leaving Ur and sacrificing Isaac), and the Jews sought forgiveness in the ceremonial institutions of the Levitical sacrifices, so also the New Covenant offers justification, or at least assurance of justification, at a specific point by obedience to its positive precepts.

While the precepts of the Gospel are summarized by faith in Jesus Christ and repentance, the "ceremonial precepts" of the Gospel are the sacraments of the church.⁶⁰⁰ These are the "signs and seals" of the new covenant.⁶⁰¹ The function of the sacraments is to assure man, by his obedience to the precepts, that God has bestowed on him the promises of the covenant. Since the covenant involves man's part and God's part, man must have some means of being assured that God has done his part. It is the sacraments which assure him that God has fulfilled his covenantal obligations. They are the visible signs that man has received the divine promises of the covenant.⁶⁰² In particular, it is the sacrament of baptism which particularly relates to the point of justification.

While Limborch rejects the Romanist view of baptism as a work which effects justification *ex opere operato*,⁶⁰³ he argues strongly that the moment of baptism is the point at which the believer is fully assured of God's promises. He defines the sacrament of baptism in this way:⁶⁰⁴

Baptism, therefore, is a rite of the New Testament by which the faithful by immersion into water as by a sacred token are assured of the grace of God toward them, the remission of sins and eternal life, and by which they pledge themselves to the reformation of life and obedience to the divine precepts.

Baptism, then, is the moment of objective assurance for the believer. It has an objective efficacy which persuades the mind in assurance.⁶⁰⁵ While baptism does not function as a Romanist instrument of justification, it does function as an instrument which persuades

⁶⁰⁰ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, lxvi, the chapter title reads: De preceptis Jesu Christi ceremonialibus, seu Sacramentis.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., V, lxvi, 12: Sacramenta, uti diximus, sunt foederis divini cum hominibus signa, ac veluti sigilla.

⁶⁰² Ibid., V, lxvi, 15: Instituit nempe ritus quosdam, ut sint tanquam signa visibilia, quibus homines de foederis conditionibus confirmarentur. Nam a parte Dei sunt quasi pignora, quibus testatum facit, se gratiam, quam in foedere promisit, non minus certo exhibiturum, quam signum illud visibile administrari curat: Ex parte hominum rationem habent novae cuiusdam obligationis, qua officii vinculum promissio ne colligatum arctius adstringitur. Unde & pars sunt officii humani; quia Deus ad cultum spiritualem quem in foedere exigit, etiam hanc obligationis testificationem per ritus hosce adjungi praescribit.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., V, lxvi, 21.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., V, lxvii, 5: Baptismus itaque est ritus Novi Testamenti, quo fideles immersione in aquam, tanquam sacra tessera, confirmantur de gratiosa Dei erga ipsos voluntate, remissione peccatorum ac vita aeterna; seque ad vitae emendationem praeceptorumque divinorum obedientiam obstringunt. Limborch considers immersion as the primary mode of baptism, but is willing to permit other modes if the circumstances deem it the most expedient, cf. V, lxvii, 12, 13.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., V, lxvi, 32.

the mind of the believer that redemption has actually been applied to him.⁶⁰⁶ Indeed, it is the act itself which bestows that assurance. Thus, the purpose of baptism is to assure the penitent believer that he has, in fact, received the remission of sins. For the penitent believer, it is his objective certainty.⁶⁰⁷

However, Limborch's covenantal theology and baptisification apparently moved him toward the affirmation that the rite of baptism is the moment at which the remission of sins is formally bestowed on the penitent believer. One of the issues which divided the Remonstrants was the necessity of baptism.⁶⁰⁸ Faith alone does not justify, but it is the obedience of faith which justifies. Baptism is that first act of faith and repentance. It symbolizes the believer's resolve to repent of his sins, and consequently is the first act of repentance.⁶⁰⁹ This movement from symbolic to an actual means of conveying grace is more apparent in his commentary. For instance, concerning Acts 16:31, he argues that the

⁶⁰⁶ Limborch rejects infant baptism as the usual practice though he thinks no one ought to deny an infant access to the sacrament. See *Ibid.*, V, lxviii, 1: Ita videmus fidem ac resipiscentiam passim requiri ante Baptismum. In his *Commentarius*, cv. Acts 2:38, he writes: Hinc & fides semper praexigitur, tanquam conditon praerequisita ante baptismum. See also *Commentarius*, cv. Acts 8:37; 10:47,48; 16:31,32,33, 19:4,5. Limborch was influenced by the Mennonite community in the Netherlands. Harold S. Bender, "Arminianism," in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, ed. by H. S. Bender & C. H. Smith (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), 1:160, argues that the intercourse between Remonstrants and Mennonites was "close, intimate and continuous." Mennonites were trained at the Remonstrant Seminary from its beginning in 1634 till a Mennonite Seminary was established in Amsterdam in 1735. Consequently, Limborch who taught at that institution had close contact with Mennonites. Further, many Mennonite ministers participated in the Collegiants (Rijnsburgers) which were influential among Remonstrant ministers. In fact, N. van der Zijpp, "Limborch, Philippus van," in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, ed by Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), 3:346 notes that "after the death Galenus Abrahamsz (q.v.) in 1706 he {Limborch} trained a number of Mennonite preachers and also because of the influence of his books and his theological ideas, such as rejection of predestination, emphasizing practical Christianity, and his aversion to infant baptism" he was well received by the Mennonite community. Locke, in his letters to Limborch, often refers to Limborch's "Mennonite friends," e.g., see Locke to Limborch, November 14, 1688 in De Beer, *Correspondance of John Locke*, no. 1090.

⁶⁰⁷ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, lxvi, 27: Baptizamini ergo in remissionem peccatorum, tantumdem est, atque recipite Baptismum quo Deus remissionem peccatorum obsignat; & persuasi estote, vos per poenitentiam & fidem in Jesum Christum tan certo remissionem peccatorum consecuturos, quam aqua corpus vestrum abluatur.

⁶⁰⁸ See Louis Ellies du Pin, *Bibliothèque Des Auteurs Separez de la Communien De L'Eglise Romnaine, du dix-septie'me Siecle* (Paris, 1719), 1:246: Les Remonstrans, quoqi que plus unis enta'eux etoient neantmoins divisez sur deux poins, scavoir sur la Trinite, & sur necessite du Baptem. Quelques-uns d'entreux nioient le mystere de la Trinite, & favori soient l'anabptisme. Apparently, Limborch is influenced by this discussion and, perhaps as a result, is rather ambiguous concerning the specific point of justification.

⁶⁰⁹ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, lxvii, 12: Ritu hoc adumbrabatur resipiscentiae a peccatis propositum.

word "believe" includes all the conditions prescribed in the new covenant and points to verse 33 to prove this since there it is recorded that they were baptized.⁶¹⁰ He argues that baptism in Acts 2:38 is viewed as a public profession of faith. It is, in fact, a "condition for the remission of sins."⁶¹¹ At Acts 19:1-5 he argues that the difference between John's baptism and the baptism of Christ is that the latter is the "means of regeneration."⁶¹² Consequently, Limborch came to regard obedience to the baptismal precept as a transitional point. He certainly regards it as the moment of objective assurance, but seemed to advocate that it was also the ordinary point at which the remission of sins is received.

Yet, this does not mean that Limborch regards baptism as absolutely necessary for salvation any more than he regarded faith in Christ as necessary for salvation. Rather, baptism is to be regarded as the ordinary means of remission of sins for the believer in Christ. At the very least, Limborch believes that the external rite of baptism gives the believer an objective assurance. It is only at that point that the believer can be fully assured even though he may have received the remission of sins by his "faith and holiness of life" which are the moral conditions of justification.⁶¹³ Thus, the point of justification is undefined except that it is through faith and holiness of life and that the believer is assured of that justification by his obedience to the ceremonial precept of baptism.

The State of Justification. Whatever that initial act of obedience is that secures one's justification before God, must the believer be constantly involved in such acts of obedience in order to remain in the state of justification? For instance, is the believer justified while he sleeps when he is unable to perform any acts of obedience? Does one remain in a state of justification if he fails to perform any good works on a given day? Are we to suppose that one who does not work righteousness on a particular day has lost the grace of the new covenant? Limborch deals explicitly with these kinds of questions. In response, he distinguishes between the act of faith and the habit of faith.

He argues that all acts of faith contribute toward the habit of faith, and that the very first act of faith is the beginning of the habit of faith. The habit is progressed and perfected by the subsequent acts. Every act of faith concurrently produces the habit of faith. "Consequently," Limborch argues, "it is clear that the difference between a believer and an infidel is not only the acts, but is also located in the habit."⁶¹⁴ Thus, the believer

⁶¹⁰ Limborch, *Commentarius*, cv. Acts 16:31.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, cv. Acts 2:38: *Hac itaque conditione remissionem peccatorum, non tantum illius, quod Jesum intersciendo commiserunt, sed & omnium, ipsis, promittit, ac bland illa Evangelii promissione compunctors illorum animas solatur, ac fidem in Christum ac resipiscentiam illis persuadet. Sic Acts XIII.38,39 XXII.16 & I Joan I.7.*

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, cv. Acts 19:1-5: *quod baptismus Christi fit medium regenerationis, ac spiritualem peccata deleni vim habeat, qua Joannis baptismus destitutus fit*

⁶¹³ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, lxvi, 22: *Hinc enim sequetur, Sacramenta immediata sua vi in nobis operari & efficere, tanquam instrumenta, justificationem. Atqui Scriptura nunquam id tribuit Sacramentis, sed semper fidei & sanctimoniae, uti passim videre est. Non quod fides & sanctimonia justificationem opereentur, ea enim Dei actus est; sed conditio sint quam Deus ab homine stipulatur, & quae praestita justitiam homini imputat: hinc est quod per fidem justificari passim dicamur. Nusquam autem effectus iste Sacramentis adscribitur.*

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V, xi, 6: *Atque ita liquet, discrimen inter fidelem & infidelem non in solis actibus, sed & in habitu esse positum.*

who is asleep remains in a justified state since he possesses the habit of faith even though he may not be externalizing it at any given point.

Consequently, it is the habit of faith which justifies. This habit of faith is begun, progressed and perfected by subsequent acts of faith. One remains in the state of justification as long as he retains this habit of faith. Foster correctly observes that in Remonstrant thought justifying faith "is a disposition or mental state, which begins, of course, with the act" and it is this mental state "which is regarded as constituting our righteousness."⁶¹⁵ Yet, this "mental state" is maintained by acts of faith or good works. This involves the sanctification of the believer.

It is interesting that Limborch devotes little attention to the doctrine of sanctification as a specific topic. He devotes only a single page to the discussion of it under the heading of De Sanctificatione.⁶¹⁶ However, in that section he draws an important distinction. He distinguishes between two senses of sanctification, one broad and the other specific. In the former sense, it denotes regeneration and the progressive growth of the believer in general, but in the latter sense it refers to an additional gift distinct from regeneration. Sanctification, specifically considered, is given to those who are already regenerated and living righteously. It is given for the purpose that they might be more perfectly separated from the world.⁶¹⁷ In this sanctifying work, God gives their intellect a clearer knowledge of his will, and moves their will to a greater hatred of evil and a more powerful love of God.⁶¹⁸ This specialized sense of sanctification is the result of a progressive work of God in successive stages of regeneration.

Limborch defines more exactly the progressive character of sanctification in the believer elsewhere. He divides the Christian life of obedience into three stages: (1) Beginning Faith (*fides incipientium*), (2) Progressive Faith (*fides proficientium*), and (3) Mature or Perfect Faith (*fides adulatorum seu perfectorum*).⁶¹⁹ He refers to these stages as "degrees of regeneration" (*regeneratorum gradus*).⁶²⁰ They are, therefore, degrees of sanctification in the broader sense of the term.

Each stage of faith or regeneration is defined according to the ability of the believer to deal with the habit of sin which he contracted in his unregenerate state. The believer in the beginning state firmly assents to the Gospel and resolves to deny sin, but the habit of sin often overcomes him though he reforms his life immediately thereafter.⁶²¹ The believers in the progressive state are those who abstain from sin without as great a struggle as the beginners. The habit of sin does not hold them in the kind of dominion

⁶¹⁵ Robert V. Foster, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1898), p. 689. He cites Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, iv, 31, 32, 37 as an example of this "Arminian view."

⁶¹⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, VI, v.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., VI, v, 2, 3: hinc sanctum esse significat sancte vivere: & sic Sanctificatio denotat ipsam regenerationem...Hae autem Sanctificatio, de qua hic agimus, specialiter sic dicta, confertur illis qui iam regenerati sunt per fidem, & ex fide sancte vivunt; estque perfectior quaedam & continuo augecens filiorum Dei ab hoc impuro mundo separatio.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., VI, v, 4, 5.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., V, xii, 18.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., V, lxxviii, 14.

⁶²¹ Ibid., V, xii, 18. His biblical examples are the Corinthians in 1 Cor 3:1-3, and the Hebrews in Heb 5:12,13; 6:1,2.

which it once held them in the beginning state. However, they still struggle with the flesh and the habit of sin has not been extinguished in them.⁶²² The believer in the mature or perfect state has extinguished the habit of sin in his life.⁶²³ They are not sinless since they may fall inadvertently or ignorantly, but they have conquered willful sins. Though Limborch never identifies it as such, this stage is apparently Limborch's specialized sense of sanctification.⁶²⁴

At all stages the believer, because he is a believer, is in a saved state. If a recent convert were to suddenly die in the initial stage of faith, then he could expect to receive the heavenly blessings. However, if a convert had not made sufficient progress in his years as a Christian, that is, he was still in the initial stage when he should be in the progressive stage, then he could not expect the heavenly rewards.⁶²⁵ God expects the believer to grow, and if his life is spared, then God expects the believer to progress to the next stage. It is required that one proceeds from one degree of sanctification to another.⁶²⁶ Thus, one maintains his status of justification by progressive sanctification. In other words, one maintains his justification if he grows in holiness and good works. The state of justification, then, depends upon sanctification. One is not only justified by works, he remains justified by works.

The Assurance of Justification. The practical question which faces the believer is how can he be sure that he is at the stage he ought to be in order to be assured of his justification before God. How can one be sure that he is at the proper stage of sanctification in order to be assured of his justification at any point in time? Limborch answers that just as there is a general and a specific sanctification, there is also a general and a specific assurance or certainty of salvation.

There is an assurance which is common to all believers based upon the certainty of the Word and God's promises. Everyone who believes exhibits a assurance in God's love toward them (*fiducia*), and based upon that assurance, every believer who obeys God's commands can be assured of God's saving grace toward him in particular. The Word of God and the divine promises are "ordinarily sufficient" for the assurance of the believer.⁶²⁷ This assurance is conditioned upon faith and obedience. Limborch argues that

⁶²² Ibid., V, xii, 19. He refers to Gal 5:16,17 and Eph 4:15 as illustrations of his meaning.

⁶²³ According to Limborch, the corrupt nature is not necessarily permanent. It is possible for man to shed his "natural corruption" altogether. See Ibid., V, xv, 2: *Esse autem & remanere in homine regenito naturalem corruptionem, & concupiscentiae innatae reliquias, quas Deus in hac vita tollere nolit, quibusque homo regenitus subinde ad peccandum impellatur, a ratione alienum est, & Scripturae adversum.*

⁶²⁴ Ibid., V, xii, 20. He refers to 1 John 3:9; 5:18 and Phil 3:15 as proof. There is an element of perfectionism in Limborch's thinking. See also V, lxxviii, 17: *Apostolus Joannes docet hominem regenitum eo usque pervenire non tantum ut non peccet, I Epist. V.18. sed & peccare non possit, cap. III.9.* William B. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, 1880), 3:84 believes the Remonstrants provided the "germ" of the Wesleyan doctrine of perfectionism. See also Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:454 who also uses the term "germ" in his assessment.

⁶²⁵ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, V, xii, 21.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., V, lxxviii, 14.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., VI, vi, 12: *Atqui etiam illa certitudo hauriri potest ex verbo Dei, & claris illo contentis promissis, quae homo fidelis certo sibi applicare potest... Illaque certitudo ordinarie videtur*

it is possible to be certain of one's present state of salvation "if he perseveres in faith and obedience to God's commands."⁶²⁸ Apparently one is certain of salvation only in so far as he is able to see himself as faithful and obedient to the divine commands. This is overwhelmingly weak since Limborch gives the reader no basis on which to judge whether he is an initial believer who should be in the progressive state or whether he is a progressive believer who should be in the mature state. Limborch gives no basis upon which a believer could judge which state he ought to be in. Perhaps he considered it a private judgment which only the individual himself could make.

However, there is a special certainty given to only those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is probably restricted to those who have achieved a mature or perfect faith though Limborch does not draw this connection explicitly. The sealing of the Spirit is not given to all believers, but only to a special class of believers.⁶²⁹ It is bestowed as a confirmation of God's love on pious individuals whom God approves.⁶³⁰ It renders the believer more certain of his present state of salvation (beyond even what the sacraments themselves assure him). This divine work is primarily a work of the Spirit, and the mode of that work is "difficult" to define since his mode of working is "incomprehensible." One can know that he has received it, but he will probably be ignorant of when and how he received it.⁶³¹ It is unfortunate that Limborch did not develop his thinking any further on this point. However, it is apparent that here Limborch is willing to recognize a direct work of the Spirit. It is a work that is not tied to the act justification, but is tied to the assurance of justification. Are we to say that only the mature or perfect believers have the gift of the Spirit which indwells in them? How is this received, when, and on what conditions? These questions are left unanswered by Limborch.

Conclusion

In Limborch's system, grace is appropriated on the basis of a legal principle and by means of an obedient faith. His theology clearly stands outside of the tradition of the Reformation. He does not recognize a separation of Law and Gospel except as the Law is strictly (the rigor of the Law) and less strictly (the relaxation of Law in the Gospel) conceived. But even there, it is still Law which forms the basis though its rigor is weakened. He does not recognize the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Rather, he insists that justifying faith is produced or effected by works. Works, then, stand as a concurrent cause of justification with faith.

sufficere.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, vii, 12: *Dicimus nos: fidelis certus esse potest ex divino promisso, se in gratia Dei permansurum, & vitam aeternam consecuturum, si in fide & obedientia mandatorum Dei perseveret.*

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, vi, 12: *Quaest. An omnibus vere fidelibus conceditur? Resp. Non videtur; necetiam necesse est: Quia confertur ut certos reddat de salute.*

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, vi, 9: *Hoc vero donum nullis nisi vere fidelibus ac piis conceditur, in confirmationem amoris Dei, pietatem ipsorum approbantis.*

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, VI, vi, 11: *Qualis autem haec operatio Dei sit, difficile dictu est; quia Spiritus eam operatur modo incomprehensibili; cognoscimus quidem nos illam adeptos, sed non sentimus quando aut quomodo adipiscamur.*

In view of his covenantal structure and his theory of atonement, it is clear that Limborch's theology advocates a partial role for both God and man. Salvation is neither wholly of grace, nor wholly of man. Man does not merit his salvation in the sense of perfect obedience, but neither does God simply give man righteousness apart from any inherent righteousness within man. Rather, God has established a covenant in which he will accept man's imperfect righteousness of faith and obedience as if it were perfection for the sake of Christ. Christ simply opened the door by which our imperfectly righteous works may be regarded as perfectly righteous. Yet, in the final analysis, this scheme of redemption ultimately requires a righteous act on the part of man that is inherently his. In this sense, Limborch's position implies that the work of the believer is just as meritorious as the work of Christ.

Chapter VII

Conclusion: Arminian and Remonstrant Grace

Jacobus Arminius was the fountainhead of the theological system known as Arminianism, but he is not responsible for all the many directions in which the resultant streams flowed. It is the purpose of this chapter to carefully compare the theologies of Arminius and Limborch in order to discover whether Arminius can be held accountable, either as having actually taught or logically implied, the system of Limborch. In the previous five chapters, the concept of grace held by the two theologians has been detailed in a comprehensive fashion. At this point it is necessary to consider them comparatively so that their similarities and differences might be highlighted. Only after such an examination is it possible to demonstrate the thesis of this work.

The Differences

One of the tendencies of modern treatments of Arminianism is to equate the theology of Arminius with those of his successors, the Remonstrants. This section addresses that equation. Is it proper to see Arminius and Limborch as advocating the same theological position on the doctrine of grace? Their differences indicate that a negative answer is required.

Original Righteousness

Arminius believes that man was endowed with both sufficient knowledge to obey God's will and righteousness. Adam was created with an "original righteousness" and by supernatural aid had the knowledge and strength of will to obey God. This supernatural ability was bestowed upon man's divine image. Arminius defines the image of God in terms of the faculties and nature of the soul. In the fall, this image was defaced and blackened by sin so that man's will was bound over to sin. Adam's covenant with God included the provision that if he never sinned, he would be translated into eternal glory. This covenant included his children. Arminius believed that Adam was related to his posterity in a realist sense so that even when a father rejects the Gospel he also does so in the place of his children. The upshot of this original righteousness is that if man had never sinned, he never would have died.

Limborch believes that man was endowed with *integritas* but he was not constitutionally righteous. Adam was created innocent. He denies that Adam possessed an "original righteousness." Man was created in almost a neutral condition though endowed with *integritas*. Adam was neither righteous nor guilty, but simply innocent. But the innocence of Adam was aided by his concreated *integritas*. The earth was a testing ground for this neutral creature. God aids him with knowledge (grace), but it is man's responsibility to properly use his knowledge and reason to seek and find God. However, Limborch does not believe that God established any covenant with Adam. Rather, a simple prohibition was given to test his obedience. If he failed, he would lose the grace of *integritas* and would have to depend upon reason alone until such time that God would give further grace (revelation). If man obeyed, there was no overt promise of eternal life,

but Limborch opines that God would have translated him into eternal life at some point. However, this translation would apparently occur after death. Limborch argues that Adam would have died even if he had never sinned. After death he would have received eternal life if he had obeyed in his probation period. Related to this discussion is Limborch's contention that the image of God in man is simply man's dominion over the earth. Thus, fallen man retains the full image of God after the fall since even fallen man still exercises dominion over the earth. The fall did not affect man's divine image.

It is clear that Limborch and Arminius approach man's original condition from two different standpoints. While Limborch believes in a neutral innocence, Arminius believes in a state of original righteousness. While Limborch rejects a covenantal relationship between God and Adam, Arminius affirms a covenant of works which entails benefits for his posterity. Limborch affirms that Adam was created to live out his probation until his death and then receive his reward, but Arminius maintains that Adam has the covenantal promise of immortality and that he would never die as long as he obeyed the covenant. It is a maxim in theology that one's view of the fall and its effects depends in large part upon one's view of the original state of man. If man were not created in an exalted condition, then he did not have far to fall. The nature of the created condition determines in a large way the nature of the fallen state. The differences between Limborch and Arminius on the original state of man are reflected in their differing viewpoints on the effects of the fall of man.

The Effects of the Fall

Arminius believes that the fall of Adam had a direct and personal effect upon his posterity. Because of the fall God removed all supernatural aid. Man was deprived of God's enabling Spirit and was left to himself according to the state of nature. In this state, man seeks evil or the lesser good. It is man's orientation in the state of pure nature to seek the flesh. Consequently, this deprivation of nature resulted in man's bondage to sin. Man had not only lost his primitive righteousness (by incurring the guilt of sin) but he had lost the power to will and perform anything truly good by deprivation. This is the result of man's need of the Spirit's supernatural aid to will or perform any true good. Since Adam had lost this for his posterity, the natural man no longer retained the will to seek the good. Without grace, man is bound over to sin and cannot of himself break its bonds. Further, Arminius clearly affirms that the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to his descendents. The Adamic covenant involved his descendents and so when he sinned, they sinned in him. Infants, then, bear the guilt of Adam's sin at birth. By this affirmation, Arminius presupposes that guilt or righteousness can be imputed without personal or actual involvement. It appears that Arminius conceived of this relationship as more realistic than federal though both elements are present in his thinking.

Limborch believes that the fall of Adam had only an indirect and impersonal affect upon his posterity. Because of the fall, Adam lost his *integritas*, and doomed his descendents to be born without this endowment. Instead, all are born with a *tabula rasa*. This is a deprivation, but it is not a deprivation of enabling power. Rather, man is simply deprived of an innate knowledge of God. Man still retains the ability to will and do good, and, according to his use of right reason, does will and do good. Adam's fall, then, did not bring his descendents into a state of corruption or deprivation (under stood in the

Arminian sense). Rather, they are born in a natural state without knowledge, but with the ability and will to actually perform true good without any special grace. Concerning Adam's sin itself, Limborch affirms that it is not imputed to his posterity since there is no sin but what is personal. Infants, therefore, are not born under the wrath of God. They are born neither sinful nor corrupt. Neither are they born "righteous" in any sense. Rather, they are born just as Adam was created--"innocent." They are "corrupt" only in the sense that they are born without *integritas* with which Adam was created. Thus, the only difference between Adam and his posterity is that former was created with *integritas*, but the latter are born without it.

Since Arminius and Limborch viewed the original state of man differently, it is to be expected that they would view the fallen state differently. Both agree that man is deprived of something in the fall. Arminius argues that he is deprived of righteousness and supernatural aid. Limborch argues that Adam was personally deprived of innocence and racially deprived of supernatural aid. The former deprivation is simply by the incurrance of guilt. However, the key difference is the nature of this supernatural aid. Arminius believes this aid to be an enabling power. It is a power which moves the will to seek the good. Without this aide, man is unable to move his will to the good. But Limborch conceives of this deprivation as the simple loss of innate knowledge rather than of any enabling power. Consequently, both believe that original sin is fundamentally a deprivation, but their definition of deprivation is radically different. For Arminius man is deprived of the actual ability to will the good, but for Limborch man is only deprived of the knowledge which informs the intellect, but the will is fully capable within itself, if it is informed by the intellect, to will and perform anything truly good. This involves a third point of distinction between Limborch and Arminius which is discussed below under the ability of fallen man.

Another key difference on this issue between Limborch and Arminius is the state of the infant. Limborch believes that he is born innocent, but lacking *integritas*. Infants are saved because they are innocent (not guilty) and because the work of Christ in the resurrection has reversed the effects of physical death. Nevertheless, infants are born "corrupt" in the sense that they do not have something which Adam possessed, namely, *integritas*. Arminius, on the other hand, believes that the infant is guilty of Adam's sin (thus under God's wrath) and lacking any supernatural aid of the Spirit. This difference illustrates their fundamentally distinctive approaches to sin and righteousness. Limborch's major argument against the Adamic imputation is that sin or righteousness is a personal thing and cannot be imputed or transferred for one person to another. Arminius accepts that such an imputation is possible by means of a union with the individual (whether realistically with Adam or covenantally with Christ). While the acceptance of the possibility of an imputation of one's sin or righteousness in to another does not necessarily entail that such is the case between Adam and his posterity, the denial of the possibility undermines the ground of justification which was the basis of the Reformation, that is, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers and the imputation of the sins of believer's to Christ.

The Ability of Fallen Man

Arminius argues that the free will of man was destroyed in the fall of Adam in the sense that man no longer has the volition to seek anything truly good. Man is in bondage to sin. It is true that man retains the natural ability to do true good. But this natural or constitutional ability has no will to actually move itself to the good because of the deprivation of Adam's fall. When man was deprived of super natural ability, he was deprived of the moral ability to actually will the good though he may have the constitutional ability to do it. Arminius affirms man can actually do no good without the supernatural help of the Spirit. Grace must precede, accompany and follow any true good which man does.

Limborch argues that one's freedom cannot be diminished. By this he means not only man's natural ability, but that man in the state of nature, without the aid of the Spirit, retains the full moral ability to will and do good. There is no corruption of the will nor any inability of the will. Man simply needs to be informed as to what the good is in order to accomplish it. Whatever corruption there is in man is due to his own personal sin rather than the effects of the fall. However, while personal sin corrupts, it does not destroy man's moral ability to do good under any circumstances as long as he uses reason correctly. Personal corruption and natural ignorance may make doing good difficult or practically impossible, but it does not destroy man's moral ability to do good in the state of nature. The necessity of grace is only seen in view of man's need of knowledge to inform the intellect what the good is in order to do it. Man's ability remains exactly the same as Adam's before the fall with one exception. That exception is the presence of the example of sin which surrounds fallen man as opposed to the lack of sin's influence in the original state.

The failure to make an important distinction between Arminianism and Remonstrantism has occasioned a misunderstanding of Arminius. One must distinguish between the constitutional freedom of man and the moral freedom. Arminius does argue that the freedom of the will is an essential element of man's nature. If man's will were not free, then he would no longer be man. But Arminius' definition of this freedom is the absence of external necessity. Man's will cannot come under any kind of external necessity. If there is no necessity, man's will is free. However, this freedom does not imply that the will does, in fact, move itself to anything truly good. Due to the lack of the Spirit's work, Arminius argues that man's will is imprisoned from within by sin. Man still retains the ability to choose, but he does not retain the power to actually move his will to choose. Man's moral freedom has been captivated and destroyed by sin. Limborch strongly maintains the metaphysical freedom of man, and argues that this implies a moral freedom for man. Man cannot, by definition, be enslaved to sin in such a way that destroys his moral freedom. Man must always retain the ability to actually move the will to choose or else he is no longer man. For Limborch, if the moral freedom is lost, then the natural freedom is destroyed as well. Arminius, however, believes that while man retains free will (no external necessity can force him to act), sin has so captivated man's moral freedom that it cannot do anything good without God's supernatural aid. Consequently, Limborch believes fallen man is able to do good without grace by the pure use of his reason, but Arminius denies that any such thing is possible without divine grace.

The Nature of the Spirit's Work

Arminius affirms that an internal, direct, and super natural work of the Spirit is necessary for faith. In traditional Reformed phraseology, he affirms that the Spirit ordinarily works with and by means of the Word, but there is an extraordinary work of the Spirit which is apart from the external Word. The Spirit is not bound by the external Word and can work without it. However, even where the external Word is present, the work of the Spirit is to present the Word to man's heart internally. This is an immediate and direct work of the Spirit. He presents the Word to the intellect and convinces it, and he moves the will to accept the Word and act upon it. It is necessary to recall that in Arminius' theology man's corruption extends not only to the will, but also to the intellect. Consequently, the Spirit must act upon the intellect and the will to accomplish his purpose. Even when the external call is present, it is not efficacious unless the internal call is present, that is, the work of the Spirit. This work of regeneration is necessary for faith. Man is unable to believe except through the bestowal of the Spirit's regenerative grace.

Limborch affirms that the Spirit always works through the Gospel or common grace. His work is never immediate or direct, but always mediate and indirect. While he distinguishes between the external and the internal call, in his view the two are inseparably joined together. One cannot act without the other and where one is present the other is always there. In fact, Limborch does not think of these two calls as separate entities. They are the same thing. The Spirit through the gospel convinces the intellect by the reasons it adduces and moves the will by its promises and threats. The work of the Spirit is reduced to a form of moralism. The person of the Spirit is not present in the work upon the heart, but is only using the Gospel as an instrument containing reasons, promises and threats to convince the intellect and move the will. There is in Limborch a practical equation of the Spirit and the Word.

Arminius and Limborch disagree on the nature of the Spirit's work because their view of fallen man is different. According to Arminius, the intellect and the will have been so corrupted or deprived that the immediate regenerating work of the Spirit is necessary to enable man to believe. According to Limborch, all that is necessary is to convince man to actually choose what he is already able to choose. The internal work of the Spirit is not required for this choice, but only persuasive arguments, promises and threats. Without revelation, "right reason" has this function, but in the age of revelation, the Word of God takes on the supplementary task. The Gospel itself is the highest form of revelation and the most persuasive influence in coming to faith in God and Christ. The grace of the gospel message is not different in kind, but simply in degree, from the common grace of "right reason." Their difference on the nature of the Spirit's work is simply a reflection of their difference on the nature of fallen man.

The Implications of the Death of Christ

Arminius maintains that the death of Christ was a full and complete satisfaction for sin according to the rigor of divine justice. He argues that the law of God is inflexible. Mercy found a way to both satisfy the rigor of justice and at the same time offer salvation to man. This was effected through the penal substitution of Jesus Christ. He suffered the eternal and temporal penalties of sin in man's place. His death earned a real merit which is bestowed upon believers in justification. Arminius' doctrine of atonement is

fundamentally the same as that of the Reformers except he gives an explicit universal potential to the benefits of Christ's death. These benefits are universal in potential but not in actuality. They are only actually applied to believers. Christ is the potential substitute for all men, but the actual substitute for those whom God has elected in Christ as believers.

Limborch maintains that the death of Christ is regarded by God as a satisfaction for sin according to grace, but not according to the intrinsic merit of the death itself. The death of Christ is meritorious for universal redemption only because God's will has determined to regard it as such. The intrinsic value of Christ's death, according to the rigor of divine justice, is insufficient for the redemption of all men. Thus, the satisfaction which was rendered for sin was not a full and complete one. Rather, God was satisfied by the determination of his own will rather than by the demands of his justice. While the death of Christ exhibited God's wrath and did pay the physical penalty of sin, it did not satisfy the retributive justice of God. Rather, God regards Christ's death as a substitute for man even though it is a substitute which is insufficient according to the rigor of divine justice. The mercy of God moderated God's justice so that it was not inflexible with regard to man's sin. The death of Christ did not fulfill God's just demands, but relaxed God's demands upon man. This relaxation of the demands of the Law has universal consequences so that a man who has never heard the Gospel may be saved by meeting the demands of the Law according to the revelation available to him. The effects of Christ's death are universally applied without faith, that is, God's law now stands relaxed for all men. Justification is bestowed when one meets the demands of that relaxed Law.

The difference between Arminius and Limborch is the same as the difference which exists between Calvin and Grotius. It is the difference between the penal theory of atonement and the governmental theory. According to the former, Christ paid a full penalty of sin as a substitute for man. According to the latter, Christ simply relaxed God's Law so that man is able to effectively accomplish them. For Arminius, the Law remains intact and inflexible, but fulfilled by Christ in his life and death. For Limborch, the Law is moderated and relaxed, and the relaxed demands of the Law are then met by man for his salvation. The ground of salvation in Arminius is a just and real fulfillment of the Law's demands which is given to man by imputation, but in Limborch it is an abrogation of the just demands of the Law. The difference between Arminius and Limborch here is the difference between what Christ has done for us and in our stead, and what man must do for himself in addition to Christ's work. It is the difference between God imputing Christ's righteousness to the believer and the believer receiving righteousness on the basis of his own act of faith.

The Nature of Saving Righteousness

According to Arminius, the righteousness which man receives in justification is wholly external to himself. It is, in fact, the righteousness of Christ which is bestowed upon him. Faith is regarded as an act and an instrument. It is the instrumental cause of justification. Faith receives the gift of righteousness. It does not, as an act, contain within itself saving righteousness. The righteousness of justification is the righteousness of Christ which he earned in his life and death and is bestowed upon the believer as if he

were personally righteous. Faith is the condition for the reception of that righteousness, but it contains no merit within itself, but receives all merit from outside of itself.

According to Limborch, the righteousness which man receives in justification is partly based upon his own imperfect righteous act of faith. It is partly his own righteous act and partly a righteousness which God grants independent of the righteousness of Christ. Faith does not contain within itself a justifying righteousness according to the rigor of divine justice, but it does contain a righteousness which God graciously regards as justifying. Limborch explicitly denies that this is an imputation of Christ's righteousness. In Limborch's system, God is willing to declare man righteous because of what Christ has done and because of man's faith. However, all that Christ did was to relax the Law so that what man does God can regard as righteousness. Faith becomes an act of human righteousness which meets the demands of the relaxed Law. It is accounted righteousness graciously because of Christ's work relaxed the Law, but it is righteousness in that it does meet the actual demands of the relaxed Law. Yet, even the work of Christ is based upon a relaxation of the Law rather than a real fulfillment of the demands of the Law. Thus, the ground of salvation is two-fold: Christ's work and man's faith. Though the former precedes the latter, without the latter there is no righteousness. This is not simply because faith is the instrument or the receptacle by which righteousness is received from Christ, but because it is itself a work of righteousness and forms the foundation of God's accounting man righteous. In other words, man must be righteous according to the relaxed demands of the Law before God counts him as righteous. Indeed, technically, God does not count him as righteous since by faith he is, in fact, righteous in that he has met the actual demands of the relaxed Law. It is imputed to him or counted as his only in the sense that man needed the work of Christ to relax the law. Thus, according to Limborch, man becomes righteous by the righteousness inherent in faith rather than by a righteousness that is given external to faith. This is consistent with his principle that there is no righteousness but what is personal. Thus, man is righteous by the righteousness of personal faith rather than by something external to himself.

The difference between Arminius and Limborch at this point is of paramount importance. It is the difference between an internal or inherent righteousness and an external gift of righteousness. Limborch holds that God graciously regards man's own act of faith as righteousness itself. His concept of grace is simply the relaxation of Law. Arminius holds that God counts faith as the condition for the reception of righteousness external to personal faith. This grace is a free gift of true merit given to believers. Limborch regards faith as containing merit (in the sense of a relaxed Law), but Arminius excludes merit from faith. Limborch denies that righteousness is *extra nos*, but Arminius affirms the Reformation dogma of the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the ground of acceptance before God. While Limborch and Arminius may sometimes write with similar terminology (such as the "act of faith"), their presuppositions and framework for understanding faith give an entirely different sense to their words. In a similar way, Limborch's use of the terms "propitiate," "satisfy," and "redeem" in reference to the work of Christ does not imply that he meant the same thing that his contemporary opponents among the Contra-Remonstrants meant. Presuppositions determine the meaning which is attached to a particular term. This is certainly the case between Limborch and Arminius. While they often use similar terminology, they mean very different things. It is, therefore, improper to read Limborch's understanding of the merit of faith into Arminius'

description of faith as an act. Faith for Arminius is only a receptacle for the gift of righteousness. It is not a meritorious act.

The Condition of Applied Righteousness

Arminius affirms the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. Just as he excludes all merit from faith, he excludes all works from faith. It is the internal act of trust which renders faith effectual. Of course, while faith alone saves, this faith is never alone. Yet, the sole condition of justification is faith without works.

Limborch specifically rejects the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. He argues that the Biblical concept of faith includes works of obedience. The faith that saves is the obedience of faith. This includes the works of faith which are part of the Law of faith. The particularization of which works are necessary and at which work God saves are not clearly outlined by Limborch though he seems to have been involved in a movement toward regarding baptism as the work of faith at which God saves. Given his view of faith, it is impossible to disassociate his works of faith from merit. They are righteous acts of faith on the basis of which (propter) God declares men righteous according to the relaxed definition of the Law, that is, the Law of faith. Thus, baptism is not simply the passive act of receiving a righteousness extra nos, but it is itself, as a work of faith, an act which contains merit within itself. Limborch's definition of faith as the meritorious compliance with the relaxed Law of Christ entails the position that all works of faith are meritorious.

In this whole discussion of the appropriation of righteousness, Arminius clearly stands with the Reformers. Limborch's position lends itself to the charge of a return to salvation by meritorious works against which the Reformation revolted.

It is clear from the discussion of this section that the theological differences between Arminius and Limborch are substantial. It is inaccurate to refer to Arminius and Limborch as representatives of the same theological position. While there may be some sense in which the two may be grouped together, and this will be investigated below, the differences between them are of such a nature that it cannot be argued that they hold the same doctrine of grace. They do not agree on the effects of Adam's fall, on the ability of unregenerate man, the nature of the Spirit's operation, the principle of atonement, the nature of justifying righteousness and the condition of appropriating that righteousness. It is clear that these two theologians have numerous points of disagreement. They are not representatives of the same narrow theological tradition. The position outlined in the introduction which maintains that the theologies of Remonstrantism and Arminianism are the same is inaccurate. There is sufficient difference between the two theologies that they cannot be regarded as one system.

The Problem of Logical Entailment

A second position outlined in the Introduction concerning the relationship between Arminius and Remonstrantism is that the former, though different in many respects, logically entails the latter. Arminius unconsciously opened the flood-gates for Socinian and Unitarian thinking. His principles, if they are properly evaluated, entail Limborch's system. The issue here is whether or not the similarities undermine the

differences. Do the similarities give a coherence which reduces both systems to the same thing? Despite the apparent differences between the theologies of Arminius and Limborch, do their similarities entail a logical relationship between the two? How does one evaluate the similarities of their positions in light of their differences? Which are more fundamental: the differences or the similarities? What is the nature of this logical relationship between the two? In order to answer these questions, the similarities between the two systems must first be examined.

The Similarities

While there may be many broad similarities between the two theologians, the purpose of this section is to note those which bear particularly upon their doctrines of grace. For instance, they share common views on church polity, church/state relations, etc. But these do not have a direct influence upon their theologies of grace. Consequently, the discussion here is limited in scope. Further, the discussion is limited to the accomplishment and application of redemption in time (the covenant within history) rather than the source of redemption in the eternal decrees (the covenant of election). Within this limited scope, there are three fundamental similarities: (1) the resistibility of grace, (2) the universal potential of Christ's work, and (3) the conditionality of the new covenant.

First, Arminius and Limborch agree that grace is rendered efficacious by the cooperation of free will. They also agree that this grace is resistible. In some sense, both Limborch and Arminius are synergistic. They believe that man must cooperate with God's grace in order for it to be efficaciously applied to the individual. Man's natural freedom cannot be violated by the movement of grace. Grace cannot take on the character of an external necessity which forces the will of man to choose faith or reject faith. Rather, it belongs to the nature of the will itself that it cannot be moved by any external necessity. It must always remain free from such compulsion. Grace, then, is contingent, in some sense, upon the free response of man to the gospel, and that grace is not irresistible.

Second, Arminius and Limborch agree that the atonement has universal potential.⁶³² They disagree about the nature of the atoning work of Christ, but both firmly believe that Christ, in some sense, died for all men. In both their systems, it is fiducia in the proposition that "Christ died for me" which grounds saving faith. According to both Limborch and Arminius, one can be sure that Christ died for him only if he died for everyone or else there will always be a doubt about whether Christ died for any given individual or not. The assurance of salvation rests upon confidence in Christ's death for the individual and this is guaranteed by the proposition that Christ died for all men. All men, therefore, can trust in the fact that Christ died for them. The question for Limborch and Arminius is not, "did Christ die for me?", but "how do I know the benefits of Christ's

⁶³² It is part of Arminius' fame that he supposedly restored this universality to the mainstream of Christian thought. Frederic Platt ranked Arminius with Augustine and Athanasius for his contribution on this score, see "Arminianism," I:807. Others have repeated his understanding, A. J. G. Hawes, "Arminius and His Teaching," *The Church Quarterly Review* 97 (October 1923): 134, and Lowell M. Atkinson, "The Achievement of Arminius," *Religion in Life* 19 (September 1950): 430.

death have been applied to me?" This question is answered differently by the two theologians,⁶³³ but they agree that the prior question is whether or not Christ died for all men. On that question, they both give an affirmative answer.

Third, Arminius and Limborch agree that the new covenant is conditional in nature. Neither believes that the justification is given universally. Rather, they affirm faith as the condition of the new covenant for the appropriation of grace. Frederic Platt has called conditionalism the "supreme principle of Arminianism."⁶³⁴ This reaches back to the Arminian view of predestination. For both theologians, God elects believers in Christ, that is, he elects those who respond in faith to Christ. It is a conditional election. Consequently, the bestowal of the benefits of the new covenant are likewise conditioned upon faith.

The Nature of the Similarities

The similarities discussed above do not reduce the system of Arminius to a Remonstrant theology. These similarities which appear between Arminius and Limborch are set in an entirely different framework within their respective systems. Though they share some points of contact in terms of both principles and particular points, their presuppositions are sufficiently different to render their systems logically incompatible. Only by renouncing certain presuppositions can Arminius be charged with the logical entailment of Remonstrantism. Armani's' doctrine of grace is that of the Protestant Reformers whereas the doctrine of grace in Limborch is an aberration of that original teaching. Arminius, in relation to the Reformation, is orthodox, but Limborch, in that same relation, is heterodox.

It is true that Limborch and Arminius share a synergistic view of the reception of grace. However, this similarity is more apparent than real. Synergism has a different character in Arminius than it does in Limborch. The Remonstrant theologian regards the action of the free will as meritorious in some inferior sense. The reason it can be regarded as such is that this free action arises from the natural ability of man to will and do the good. The assistance of the Spirit is restricted to the arguments, threats and promises of the Gospel. Man, by his own right use of revelation according to the principles of his reason, is able to believe without any internal or personal work of the Spirit. Since faith is something that arises from man's own free act, and it is an obedient act, it contains within itself a merit that cooperates with the merit God has provided in the work of Christ (which in this case is simply the relaxation of the Law). It cooperates by not only yielding assent, but earning its own merit. For Arminius, the notion that the free act of the will is meritorious or simply arises from within man himself is anathema. The freedom of the will to actually move itself toward the good is the result of the regenerative work of the Spirit. Faith is not merit, but the reception of merit. Thus, while Arminius and Limborch agree that the will cannot be forced to accept grace, they disagree on the nature and origin of the free acceptance of that grace. Their only fundamental point of agreement is that the natural freedom of man cannot be overruled without serious injustice to the nature of man as man. It is this premise which forces both systems to recognize the resistibility of grace.

⁶³³ They both answer: "faith." However, they define "faith" differently, and consequently their answers are different. They also disagree about the nature and content of those benefits.

⁶³⁴ Platt, "Arminianism," 1:811.

It is also true that Limborch and Arminius share a universalistic outlook on the death of Christ. However, this similarity is also more apparent than real. The nature of that universality is strikingly different in the two theologians. Limborch argues that the satisfaction which Christ paid for man is automatically applied to all men. Christ established a new covenant in which the Law is relaxed. The relaxing of that Law is not dependent upon faith or conditioned upon some response by man. Rather, Christ has propitiated God in general and opened a way for all men. He has opened the door, and it stands open for all men. Anyone may walk in, but Christ has done all he is going to do in the accomplishment of redemption. Man's faith must now accomplish the remainder of his redemption. Consequently, the benefits of Christ's death are indiscriminately applied to all. However, Arminius regards this universality quite differently. For him the effects of Christ's death are potentially universal, not actually universal. This difference between himself and Limborch is the result of their divergent views of the nature of the atoning work. Christ died in the place of all men potentially in that Christ is regarded as no man's substitute except he believes and the call of faith is offered to all. Christ intercedes only for believers in the sense that he only applies the redemptive benefits of his death for believers. God within his eternal decree of election foreknew who would believe and counted them as having died in Christ. Thus, in some sense, Christ died only for the elect, but it was God's intention to provide for the salvation of all men on the condition of faith. Thus, Limborch argues for the effective application of Christ's work to all men indiscriminately whereas Arminius argues for the application of his work to believers only.⁶³⁵

It is also true that Arminius and Limborch share a common view of the conditionality of salvation. However, conditionality has a totally different structure in Arminius than it does in Limborch. It is often assumed that any system that is conditional is, as a logical consequence, legalistic in principle. But this is simply not the case. It is important to emphasize that the legal principle is not inherent in all systems which affirm the conditional nature of the new covenant. A covenant which is based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ does not depend upon an imperfect obedience for salvation. Rather, it offers justification on the ground of the active obedience of Jesus Christ. The reception of this righteousness is conditioned upon faith, but it is not rooted in a legal principle since faith functions as an instrument of or receptacle for a righteousness wholly external to itself rather than as part of justifying righteousness. Limborch's system depends upon an internal act of righteousness on account of which God grants full justification. This justification is not rigidly conceived since it is granted outside of strict legal principles. However, it is granted according to the legal principle of faith, that is, God is willing to accept the imperfect obedience of faith in the place of perfect obedience. As Limborch wrote his friend John Locke, "the law of works is not entirely

⁶³⁵ There is a running debate between evangelical Arminians and the Reformed on whether or not the penal theory of substitution implies a limited atonement. Some Arminians have concluded that penal substitution is incompatible with universal potential, and have opted for some other theory as governmental atonement. In my view, a penal theory of substitution can be harmonized with the universal potential of Christ's atoning work. All believers are particularly redeemed within God's eternal election. If, as Arminius argues, this eternal election is conditioned upon foreseen faith, then likewise the particular substitution may also be conditioned upon foreseen faith. This line of argument is implicit in Arminius' reply to Perkins.

abolished by the law of faith, but is mitigated by it."⁶³⁶ Consequently, it is the framework of Limborch's conditionality which gives it its legal basis, and not the fact of conditionality alone. According to Limborch, man still lives up to the Law, but in Arminius' system of conditionality it is Christ who lives up to the Law in man's place. In the former, the legal principle continues, but in the latter God grants full righteousness without any internal righteousness on man's part (without any legal obedience). In the former, God weakens the Law to grant forgiveness. In the latter, the rigor of the Law remains but is fulfilled by Christ for man. While both systems retain faith as a condition, there is an integral difference between the foundation and framework for interpreting that condition. Limborch interprets the condition as man rendering to God his part of the contract, but Arminius interprets as the means by which God gives to man the fulfilled contract.

Even though Limborch and Arminius may share particular points and principles in common, the interpretative framework in which they are placed gives those points and principles an entirely different meaning. While they share a universalistic outlook, a common synergism and the principle of conditionality, at every point these similarities are construed differently and function differently in their respective systems. These similarities, therefore, do not provide a basis for the "logical sequence" of Arminianism into

The differences, then, remain intact and substantial. Arminianism cannot be reduced to Remonstrantism except Arminianism give up certain presuppositions.⁶³⁷ It must renounce the principle of the imputation of the sin or righteousness of another. It must renounce the principle of the immediate and internal work of the Spirit. It must renounce the complete and total bondage of man in sin. It must renounce the penal nature of the atonement which is the ground of salvation by grace alone. It must renounce the Reformation principle of faith alone. Such changes in theology would not be the result of a mere logical development, but rather the effect of philosophical and cultural influences impinging upon a particular movement. Just as Calvinism was dethroned in Geneva at the end of the seventeenth century, so also original Arminianism had been dethroned by the end of the same period.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ Limborch to Locke, on March 16, 1697 in De Beer, Correspondance of John Locke, no. 2222. It is interesting that in this letter, Limborch is extremely sceptical of "death-bed" conversions. He scorns a recent example of a maidservant who murdered her master and on the day she was condemned to die professed faith in the merits of Christ. The next day one of the Contra-Remonstrant ministers praised her faith and gave her the "sure hope of salvation." In connection with this example, Limborch comments: "And unforeseeing teachers nourish this rash confidence as long as they are not afraid, with no hesitation whatsoever, to adjudge salvation to impious and wicked men, if only towards the end of their lives they profess a firm trust in the merits of Christ." Limborch evidently assumes that only a life of pious trust and works of faith can assure one of personal salvation.

⁶³⁷ A pure Augustinian might argue that Arminius is inconsistent with his presuppositions by maintaining conditionality, synergism and universal atonement, but it is exactly those presuppositions which distinguish him from his Remonstrant successors. Whether or not Arminius was inconsistent is not the issue here. Rather, the point is that he cannot be classified with Remonstrantism given his presuppositions.

The Problem of Categorization

The differences between the two systems demonstrate that the two cannot be regarded as the same nor construed to be logically related by implication. Arminius' theology constantly emphasizes grace while Limborch constantly emphasizes man's ability. The presuppositions from which they approach the theology of grace are radically different. The differences between the two cannot be overcome in terms of some logical compulsion. Thus, the two systems must be distinguished in the historical categorizations of theology.

In one sense, Arminianism and Remonstrantism ought to be classified together. They both adhere to certain points which give them a common heritage: universalism, conditionality, and synergism. These are the *sine qua non* principles of Arminianism though one Arminian system may interpret them differently and set them into an entirely different framework. Yet, there is some justification for placing Arminianism and Remonstrantism into this broad category. However, this classification does nothing more than distinguish it from pure Augustinianism. This is merely a category of anti-Calvinism since one may place Socinians, Pelagians and other groups into this same broad category.⁶³⁹

Thus, while these common principles may mean that both Arminianism and Remonstrantism share a common anti-Calvinist posture, they do not provide a useful historical classification. Arminius may be called an "evangelical Arminian," "early Arminian," or "low Arminian" in distinction from Remonstrantism which may be called "liberal Arminianism," "later Arminianism," or "high Arminianism."⁶⁴⁰ But these

⁶³⁸ In fact, what I have called "Arminianism" was never actually established except in Arminius himself. His contemporary supporters and immediate followers did not agree with Arminius on every point. This is particularly true of the doctrine of penal substitution. Vossius was already teaching a governmental theory of atonement during Arminius' lifetime, see Vossius, in *Praestantium*, no. 278. Conrad Vorstius wrote on July 27, 1598 that the atonement of Christ was *non ex ipso juris rigore*, see Vorstius, in *Praestantium*, no. 28; see also no. 35. The issue of faith alone also illustrates this fact. Episcopius, during Arminius' lifetime, taught that works were necessary for justification, see Episcopius, in *Praestantium*, no. 136. On the differences between Episcopius and Arminius, see G. J. Hoenderdaal, "Arminius en Episcopius," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 60.2 (1980): 203-235. In view of these examples it may be concluded that the movement from Arminianism to Remonstrantism was in process even before the death of Arminius. Indeed, one may say that in a sense one did not develop out of the other, but that they arose simultaneously. Arminius may have simply been refining the position of Calvin, but Vossius and Episcopius were drawing upon the humanistic spirit of Erasmus. There is ground, then, to question not only the logical development of Remonstrantism from Arminianism, but also to question the historical development from Arminianism to Remonstrantism.

⁶³⁹ I am using "Calvinism" in the sense of the definitions of the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Confession of Faith. This is, admittedly, imprecise, but it is sufficient for purposes of broad historical classification.

⁶⁴⁰ Dabney, *Polemic Theology*, p. 579, refers to the theology of Wesley and Richard Watson as "high Arminianism," but the theology of Limborch and Whitby as "low Arminianism." Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:107, refers to the theology of Arminius and Wesley as "earlier Arminianism" and that of Limborch as "later Arminianism."

categories are not useful since "Arminian" here simply means anti-Calvinist. Instead of seeking some overarching principle which unites Arminius and Limborch against Calvinism, it is best to view Arminianism and Remonstrantism as two separate systems because even the principles they share are absorbed into the respective systems so differently. The categories of "Arminian" and "Remonstrant" represent the historical roots more accurately and provide a clear theological distinction between them. Under these categories various other distinctions may be made, but the fundamental distinction is between Arminianism and Remonstrantism.

In order to highlight this distinction, the following theological scale might be adopted:⁶⁴¹ Pure Augustinianism, Arminianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Remonstrantism, Pelagianism. Augustinianism would include all forms of particularistic Calvinism as Supralapsarianism, Infralapsarianism and Amyraldianism.⁶⁴² Arminianism would be a universalistic Augustinianism or a modified Augustinianism. This would include two major theological traditions: Lutheran and Wesleyan.⁶⁴³ The Semi-Pelagian category is best represented by Tridentine Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox tradition. Remonstrantism, represented by Limborch, must be distinguished from full-blown Pelagianism by its doctrine of atonement among other things, but distinguished from Semi-Pelagianism by its denial of the direct work of the Spirit.⁶⁴⁴ This theological scale relieves historians of the theological ambiguity of the term "Arminian." When "Arminianism" is used in the sense of "anti-Calvinist particularism," then it is still uncertain whether the particular theologian is Arminian (in the original sense), Semi-Pelagian, Remonstrant or Pelagian. Consequently, in order to mark the important distinction between Arminian and Remonstrant it is best to use separate categories for them.

Arminianism, as defined by Arminius himself, does not contain a substantial departure from the theology of grace in the Reformers. He holds the essential doctrines of the Reformation: the bondage of man in sin, the personal work of the Spirit, the penal substitution of Christ, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and justification by faith alone. The theology of Arminius is fundamentally Reformed in character. Indeed, he may have considered himself a "moderate" or "liberal" Calvinist. He is, according to my theological scale, a universalistic Augustinian. The regularity with which Arminius quotes the Reformed creeds and Augustine himself confirms this. He certainly viewed himself as belonging to the Reformed tradition. In this estimation, he was correct.

⁶⁴¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted 1977) attempts to overview the theology of grace in various systems and to set up a theological scale which reflects historical distinctions. My scale attempts a similar venture. But I do not intend to argue the extended details here as he has done. I have adopted traditional terminology as much as possible.

⁶⁴² It may be debated whether Amyraldianism belongs in the category of Pure Augustinianism instead of Arminianism since Amyraldus distinguished himself from Remonstrants and not from Arminius. Yet, the concern of Amyraldianism is still primarily particularistic.

⁶⁴³ Here I regard Wesley as the true heir of Arminius in terms of the category of Arminianism. There are, however, several points at which Wesley disagreed with Arminius (such as perfectionism).

⁶⁴⁴ Warfield, *Plan*, p. 31, distinguishes between Wesleyan (a supernatural, evangelical universalism) and Remonstrantism which he regards as fundamentally naturalistic though he distinguishes it from Pelagianism.

However, Remonstrantism involves the acceptance of certain premises which are destructive of the theology of the Reformation. In the development of Remonstrant thought one finds the spirit of the Enlightenment. Remonstrant theology is the rediscovery of the Renaissance humanism of the Italian philosophers. It is certainly the case that the Remonstrant leaders were imbibed with the thought and works of Erasmus. Living in the age of reason, the Remonstrant leaders, and Limborch in particular, became one the major forces in the undermining of evangelical theology. Frederic Pratt concluded that "Arminianism [Remonstrantism] was the medium by which the humanistic spirit of the Renaissance was translated into the theological and exegetical sphere. Its great men--Grotius, Episcopius Limborch, Brandt, Le Clerc--are all men of literary faculty and humanistic temper."⁶⁴⁵

Arminianism, therefore, stands with the theology of the Reformation while Remonstrantism represents the breakdown and disintegration of that theology. It is fundamentally Augustinian while Remonstrantism is naturalistic in its outlook. That difference is the difference between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The Church was moving into a new age, and as it moved, its theology changed. This change not only affected Dutch Arminianism but Swiss Calvinism and English Anglicanism. It is reflective of the age in which reason dominated and faith in the Scriptures was slowly being undermined by the rise of autonomous philosophy and science.

Conclusion

It is important for theological clarity and historical understanding that theologians and historians alike strongly distinguish between Arminianism as a system and Remonstrantism as a system. The two are logically incompatible. It is questionable whether or not there is even a historical development from one to the other.⁶⁴⁶ It appears that Arminianism arose independently in England where it was developed and advocated by various dissenter groups as well as among Anglican clerics.⁶⁴⁷ They were influenced by Arminius' position only indirectly though they did have contact with Dutch Remonstrantism.⁶⁴⁸ It eventually blossomed into Wesleyanism as the true heir of Arminian theology though it certainly modified Arminius' positions at particular points.⁶⁴⁹ At the same time Remonstrant thought arose out of the indigenous Dutch humanism of

⁶⁴⁵ Pratt, "Arminianism," I:814.

⁶⁴⁶ The concentration of this thesis has been theology, but another thesis could be written from simply a historical perspective.

⁶⁴⁷ See Bangs, "'All the Best Bishoprics and Deaneries': The Enigma of Arminian Politics," *Church History* 42 (March 1973): 5-16; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "The Influence of Arminianism in England," in *Man's Faith and Freedom*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 46-63; R. G. H. Boiten, "Arminiaanse Invoeden in de Anglicaanse Kerk tot de Revolutie," *Vox Theologia* 23 (1953): 97-104, 129-140; O. T. Hargrave, "The Freewillers in the English Reformation," *Church History* 37 (September 1968): 271-80; and Gordon S. Wakefield, "Arminianism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 185 (1960): 253-258.

⁶⁴⁸ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "English dissenters in the Netherlands, 1640-1689," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 57.1 (1979): 37-54; and Bert Gustafsson, *The Five Dissenting Brethren: A Study on the Dutch Background of Their Independence* (London: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955).

the Netherlands.⁶⁵⁰ The controversy surrounding Arminius in the Dutch Reformed Church provided the occasion for the groundswell of Remonstrantism.⁶⁵¹ England also had a parallel development which was called Latitudinarianism. It was fundamentally Remonstrant in character.⁶⁵² Eventually, through the influence of Limborch himself, Remonstrantism found a home in the English philosopher John Locke and his supporters.⁶⁵³ Remonstrantism, then, came to dominate the theology of the Church of England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wesley rose up in opposition to this theological tradition, and gives the historical theologian a fine example of the distinction between Remonstrantism and Arminianism in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Methodism itself is divided along the lines of Arminian and Remonstrant thought. This is reflected in their major systematicians.⁶⁵⁴ It is also reflected in the modern struggle of evangelical Arminianism to find some sort of self-definition. Any definition of Arminianism will ultimately look back to Arminius, and when it does not find itself there, it may discover that it is not Arminian after all. It is, in fact, Remonstrant.

⁶⁴⁹ Alfred H. Pask, "The Influence of Arminius on John Wesley," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 185 (1960): 258-63 and J. van den Berg, "John Wesley's Contacten Met Nederland," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 52.1 (1971): 36-96. See also Elden Ralph Fuhrman, "The Concept of Grace in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1963); William Ragsdale Cannon, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of John Wesley" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1942); David Clark Shipley, "Methodist Arminianism in the Theology of John Fletcher" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1942) and G. C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1935).

⁶⁵⁰ See Herbert D. Foster, "Liberal Calvinism: The Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort in 1618," *Harvard Theological Review* 16 (January 1923): 1-38. Bangs, *Arminius*, p. 220, argues that Arminius' modifications of Beza's predestinarianism arose out of "the dogmatics implicit in the early Dutch reformers such as Velanus, Gerard Blokhoven, Coolhaes, Hermannus Herberts, Cornelis Wiggerts, Snecanus, and many of the merchant-reformers of Amsterdam." Remonstrant attitudes were also indigenous to the Netherlands but arose out of the Christian humanism of Erasmus and Coornhert. These attitudes were voiced in the controversy surrounding Arminius' modifications of Calvinism and later developed into Remonstrantism.

⁶⁵¹ See van Holk, "From Arminius to Arminianism," pp. 27-45.

⁶⁵² Note the influence Limborch had on the Cambridge Platonists in the study by Colie, *Enlightenment*; G. P. H. Pawson, *The Cambridge Platonists and Their Place in Religious Thought* (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, reprinted 1974 from 1930 edition) and T. M. Parker, "Arminianism and Laudianism in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Studies in Church History*, ed. by C. W. Dugmore and Charles Duggan (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 1:20-34. Note also the influence of Grotius in the study by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Richard Baxter and The Grotian Religion," in *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), pp. 245-250.

⁶⁵³ This is clearly illustrated by the correspondence between Locke and Limborch in de Beer, *The Correspondance of John Locke*.

⁶⁵⁴ Elden Dale Dunlap, "Methodist Theology in Great Britian in the Nineteenth Century. With Special Reference to the Theology of Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, and William Burt Pope" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1956).