

Canons of Dort–3&4Head: Art. 16-17: Man’s will and God’s “Means” in Salvation

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: God called you. God called you by his Holy Spirit. God called you in an irresistible 不可抗拒 way. God called you and gave you faith to respond. God then demanded that you respond and sing praises to him, serve him, make supplications for others, stimulate others to do good work and support his kingdom work by your giving. None of your responses caused your salvation, nor did any of your responses help in your salvation. These things were your response, and even evidence of your salvation.

Today we have 2 interesting questions to answer to conclude our study of total inability and effectual call:

What is the role of man’s will in salvation?

What is the role of “means” in salvation?

These are our headings.

Our goals are: That you will see that God’s sovereignty does not prevent him from using man’s efforts or other means to save man.

What is the Role of Man’s Will in Salvation

Article 16: Regeneration’s Effect - However, just as by the fall humanity did not cease to be human, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail, where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. In this consists the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, humanity would have no hope of getting up from its fall by its free choice, by which it plunged itself into ruin when still standing upright.

第十六条 但人由于堕落并未停止为受造者，他有悟性有意志，使全人类堕落前并未剥夺他的人性，乃是把堕落与属灵的死带给了他，所以这重生之恩并未把人看作毫无知觉的木石，也未剥夺他的意志与属性夺去，亦未对之施以强迫，乃在属灵方面唤醒之、医治之、改正之，同时用甜蜜的、大有能力的方法使之屈服。从前在那里有肉体的悖逆横行；如今在那里有甘愿和诚恳的心灵顺服，这顺服使我们的意志得到真正属灵的恢复与自由。因此，除非那阿利刚的、行作各样善事的、在我们里面动了工，人不能凭自己的自由意志希望从堕落中复原。他因妄用自由意志，从无辜的境况自行毁灭中。

1. God made man with a free will. Man kept his free will after the fall. Man did not cease to be human after the fall. Man did not become an animal. Man was still able to think, work and maintain a form of decency 体统. But though man kept his free will, his free will became twisted. Instead of wanting to work, man became lazy. Instead of taking care of this family, man chose to please himself. Instead of worshipping God, man worshipped pleasures. Instead of submitting to God’s will, man elevated his own will. Man wanted to become an enemy of God and fought against God. Man could not become God’s friend again because he did not have the ability to desire it.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be 属肉体的人不能得 神的喜悦

Simply put, man has free will, but man does not have free ability to choose rightly. He always chooses wrongly.

Man would never choose to submit to the Lord Jesus. Man is unable to choose to submit to Jesus. How sad!

2. On the other hand, everything is under the control of God. This includes the will of man. There is no area where God’s control is absent. If God’s control were not everywhere present, then he would not be God. Not even a sparrow 麻雀 falls to the ground without his will. He knows when a speck of dandruff 头皮屑 is released from your scalp 头皮! **Since every area of man’s life is corrupted, the Christian is grateful that God is pleased to be involved in every area of his life.**

3. So this is not a paradox 反合性. Man doesn’t have the ability to choose God, so God helps man to believe. God does not make man into a puppet and does not use brute force 蛮力. God restores the ability that man lost so that man can begin again to choose wisely. God had to renew man from the inside. With a renewed will, man could then begin to conform his thoughts, words, and actions to the image of God again.

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

If God did not work, man would continue to pursue his own will. And yet, even one who is already a child of God requires God to continue to help him.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me

求你使我里面重新有坚定的灵 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit

from me.

If God abandoned David, he had no hope of returning.

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal 属肉体, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Consider also:

Zechariah 4:6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by **might nor by power, but by My Spirit,**' Says the LORD of hosts.

God spiritually revives, heals, and reforms the dead sinner and makes his will conform to his. **In this process, man is pleased to go along.** After God works, man smoothly accepts and holds on to his Savior. Man then begins to obey the Holy Spirit, willingly. Man grows in grace as his will conforms more and more to his Savior.

4. You can see this gradual renewal of man's will illustrated in the life of a child. After a child is born, the parents have to teach that child what is acceptable behavior or not. When the child is rebellious 反叛, force has to be applied. Sadly, we understand this gradual renewal of man's will because we have been too influenced by our instantaneous society. If we want something, we want it done yesterday. If we want lose weight, we prefer a quick pill instead of a steady diet and exercise. But man's will is transformed more and more over time. Even regeneration takes place in a subtle 微妙 slow way. You bring your children to church. They hear the Gospel day after day, and then one day your child gets the awareness that he believes. (Bowman: This is like how a child is unaware of his conception, but is thankful for it. The fact that one does not know when something happens doesn't mean that it is not true.) You do not become perfect at regeneration. You only begin to obey. The Devil, the world, and your flesh continue to attack you. But if God did not bend man's will in regeneration, no man could be saved.

5. The Arminian, on the other hand, argues that he is able of his own free choice, to choose God. He also believes that a Christian who has fallen into sin (backslidden 背道) can get up by himself without the call from God. In doing this, he asserts what he does NOT have: Power to change. And in doing this he robs God of the glory of his work. This is why you might hear expressions like: "If it's got to be, it's up to me." Or you might hear: "God has done all he can, his hands are tied, it is now up to you." Bigger lies have never been told from the pulpit 讲台. The Devil knows that if he calls on people to reject the true God or deny that he exists, man would reject it. **So he chooses to get his people to twist the truth...appear orthodox...and continue in life. In other words, "don't eliminate truth, corrupt it."**

What is the role of "means" in salvation?

Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration - Just as the almighty work by which **God brings forth and sustains our natural life** does not rule out but **requires the use of means**, by which God, according to God's own infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise divine power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work by which God regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God with great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the **Apostles and the teachers who followed them taught** the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give God the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the **gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline.** So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what God **in good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together.** For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better God's work advances. To God alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen. 第十七条

正如神借其全能的运行(工作) 延续并支持我们的生命, 并不排除 而反需用方法, 借此神本着他无限仁慈与善良来运用他的影响, 以上所述神用以使我们重生的超自然方法, 也不排除, 或借福音的用途, 这福音就是全智的神命定作为重生的种子与灵粮. 因此, 众使徒以及继承他们的众教师, 将神的这项恩典虔诚地教导人, 为要荣耀神, 抑制一切骄傲, 同时却并不忽略福音圣洁的教训, 来遵行圣道, 圣礼与管教. 所以, 直至今日, 无论是施教的, 或是受教的, 决不可在教会中试探上帝, 将他乐意密切配合的分开. 因为恩典是借劝诫赐的; 我们越甘愿履行本份, 神的这份分往往就越显著地在我们的里面运行, 而他的工作就更直接地被推进了; 各样的方法, 以及拯救的效果的一切荣耀, 惟独永远属于神. 阿们

1. God is pleased to use "means" (instruments) to accomplish his purposes. Bowman: In order to stay alive I need to eat, and to breathe. The Lord uses the means of food and oxygen 氧气 to sustain my life. It is not so of course, that the Lord has to use these means in order to keep me alive. Being the almighty God that He is, He is able to keep me alive without food or oxygen."

2. So what "means" (instruments) does God use for man's salvation (save & sanctify)?

a. He **uses the Gospel.**

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And

how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" [17] **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

1Peter 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but **incorruptible, through the word of God which lives** and abides forever,

And then you see the result.

Acts 13:48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, **they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.**
And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

b. He uses The sacraments. Both sacraments are used to draw your mind to Christ's work on the cross.

c. He uses Christian discipline. This makes sure that you are making use of the means of grace.

3. God uses personal human work to help you grow as a Christian.

Ephesians 4:20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that **you put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that **you put on** the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

This requires thought...and work. Keep in mind that these words and directions were written to the church of God in Corinth, not to pagans 异教徒. And this is continual work. God is pleased to use you to accomplish this task.

5. Let us consider some application for those who ignore "means":

a. **What a tragedy for the Arminian who often ignores Christian discipline** and often thinks it is more loving to let the unrepentant go free. They ignore holding people's feet to the fire. How can the Christian be brought to conformity to God's will if the church will not teach and enforce it? Which child loves to be rebuked by his parents? Yet that is what the child may need.

b. **What a tragedy for those who assume God's sovereignty and effectual call negates their need for submitting to the marks of the church.**

c. **What a tragedy that many spend more time learning fluff or a maybe a few favorite Bible passages rather than the whole will of God in Scripture!** Which soldier can fight in battle on only dessert or on one meal a day? Yet, when you talk to some Christians you hear some goofy kind of Gospel. They are malnourished 营养不良.

d. **What a tragedy for those who don't faithful exposit God's Word** ...to make sure that people conform their wills to the will of God.

Ezekiel 33:6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' 7 "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Conclusion:

Man has free will but man lost the ability to do right. Only the radical 彻底 change of heart can cause man's will to be revived. And for man's heart to change, he needs the preaching of the Word...the full Gospel of Jesus Christ, accompanied by the sacraments and Christian discipline.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Now that God has worked in you, be busy with the Bible. Read it. Memorize it. Don't think that God's sovereignty negates diligent study of the Word. Use that Word to call the lost to God. And use the sacraments, not in a superstitious way, but as a means of grace. And accept discipline. It will make you safe. Then you will be able to put off sin and put on righteousness.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, since you can't please God without his working in you, why not call upon him today and say: Lord, change me! Change my will so it will conform more to Jesus Christ. Change me today!