

REFORMED DOGMATICS

SIN AND
SALVATION IN CHRIST



VOLUME THREE

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then cannot this process continue indefinitely, and why does it stop already after a few decades? Let us not speak of aging and the decline of one's faculties, for these are terms that, though they point to the phenomena, do not explain them and themselves need explanation. "Why do the cells wear out and waste away? Why do they succumb in old age to changes from which they remain protected in youth? That, up until now, is still a mystery to us."⁵² Many plants and animals, moreover, sometimes exceed the life span of humans by hundreds of years. Why is a human's vitality so quickly spent, and why do humans at most reach the age of seventy or eighty years if they are very strong?⁵³

Add to this that death as a result of the decline of one's vital powers almost never happens, neither in the case of humans nor in that of plants or animals. Almost always, death results from illness, a disaster, an accident, or such. Even in the rare instance when a person dies supposedly as a result of a decline in vital powers, the death still bears a pathological character and is caused by a disturbance of certain cells in the body. Then what is the reason death carries off almost all people before their time, often even in the prime of life or in the bloom of youth or even in the first few hours of their existence?⁵⁴ Science does not know the cause that makes death a necessity.⁵⁵ The fact that human beings die—says Professor Pruys van der Hoeven in his study of Christian anthropology—is a riddle that can only be explained by the degeneracy of their nature.⁵⁶ The mystery of death remains as much intact as that of life.⁵⁷

DOMINION OF SATAN

[342] The final penalty of sin to be discussed here consists in that, ethically speaking, the world has fallen into the power of Satan and his angels. Since Satan seduced humanity and brought about its fall (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:9,

52. H. de Varigny, *Wie stirbt man? Was ist der Tod?* trans. S. Wiarda (Minden: n.p., n.d.), 52.

53. Some time ago, Paul Ballion wrote a study in which he demonstrated that animals, too, have some sense of death, grieve over the death of one of their own, utter complaints, and sometimes even remove or bury the body (*Handelsblad* [Jan. 25, 1901]). On the age of many plants, trees, and animals, see H. Mische, *Die Erscheinung des Lebens* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), 64–70.

54. E. Metchnikoff; see *Van Loghem, *Mannen en Vrouwen van beteeknis*; K. Girgensohn, *Zwölf Reden über die christliche Religion* (Munich: Beck, 1916), 361.

55. H. de Varigny, *Wie stirbt man? Was ist der Tod?* 18.

56. In F. Delitzsch, *Apologetik*, 126.

57. Y. Delage, *La structure du protoplasma et les théories sur l'hérédité et les grands problèmes de la biologie générale* (Paris: C. Reinwald, 1895), 354, 771; *Sabatier, *La problème de la mort* (1896); L. Bordeau, *La problème de la mort, ses solutions imaginaires et la science positive*, 2nd ed. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1896); idem, *La problème de la vie* (Lyon: F. Alcan, 1901); N. Smyth, *The Place of Death in Evolution* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897); *Henry Mills Alden, "A Study of Death," *Harper's* (1895); ed. note: "This essay cannot be found in *Harper's Magazine* 1894–96; the closest is a short story by Flavel Scott Mines, "The Flower of Death," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 88 (Feb. 1894): 442–45; P. Grawitz, *Über Leben und Tod* (Greifswald: Julius Abel, 1896); C. T. Müller, *Das Rätsel des Todes* (Barmen: Wuppertaler Traktat-Gesellschaft, 1905); O. Bloch, *Vom Tode*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Juncker, 1909).

✓ 14–15; 20:2, 10), the world is in his power, lying as it does in the evil one (1 John 5:19). He is the “prince of this world” and the “god of this age” (John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4). Although it is true that after their fall the devils have been thrown into hell to be kept there till the judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), they have not yet been struck by that judgment (Matt. 8:29; Luke 8:31; James 2:19). They still appear in the gathering of the angels (Job 1; Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7), hang around in the air (Eph. 2:2; 6:12), roam around, live and work on this earth, and have great power here. Especially the Gentile world is the sphere of their activity (Acts 16:16; 26:18; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:20; 8:5; Rev. 9:20). ✓ But when Christ appeared on earth, they also joined battle with him within the boundaries of the people of God. Satan held sway and worked in the Jews who were hostile to Christ (John 8:44f.), tempted Jesus (Matt. 4:1–11), sent unclean spirits, entered Judas (Luke 22:3; John 6:70; 13:2, 27), and so on. That was Satan’s hour (Luke 22:53; John 14:30). But Christ was the stronger antagonist (Luke 11:22), opposed him all his life (Luke 4:13), overcame him and cast him out (Luke 10:18; John 14:30; 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8), and in principle withdrew the domain of the church from his rule (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13; 1 John 2:13; 4:4; Rev. 12:11). Nevertheless, he still inwardly impacts the church from without; he goes about on earth (Job 1), tempts believers and works against them (Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18), attempts to lead them astray and to cause them to stumble (1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3, 13–15; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Thess. 3:5; Rev. 12:10), so that the church is called to fight against him always (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:12f.; Rom. 16:20; 1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7; Rev. 12:11). At some point at the end of time, he will once more raise himself up in all his power (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; Rev. 12f.). But then he will also be overpowered by Christ and hurled with all his angels into the pool of fire (2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 20:10).

Belief in evil spirits occurs among all peoples and in all religions. Sometimes the fear of evil spirits almost completely crowded out trust in good spirits.⁵⁸ And in almost all Gentile religions, evil in nature is attributed to one or more spiritual beings who in character and rank equal the good gods.⁵⁹ Scripture, however, teaches otherwise; and Christianity in the early centuries in various ways restrained and opposed Jewish and pagan superstition. Church and state laid down all sorts of regulations against magic, fortune-telling, and so on, and still, up until the thirteenth century, imposed no more than disciplinary penalties on those who practiced them.⁶⁰ Even when the authorities later resorted to the death penalty, what they actually had in mind was the eradication of pagan superstition. It is therefore not right simply to hold the Christian religion and church responsible

58. G. Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1869), I, 20.

59. *Ibid.*, 24–175.

60. *Ibid.*, 287, 293; A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), I, 92; ed. note: ET: *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffat, 2 vols. (New York: Williams & Norgate, 1904–5), bk. II, ch. 3: “The Conflict with Demons.”

for all the superstition that prevailed also among Christians, especially from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Various factors contributed to it: wretched conditions in state and society, appalling occurrences of famine and the plague, the gross ignorance of the people, deficient knowledge of nature, magical kabbalistic trends among natural scientists, and so on.⁶¹

Nevertheless, the church is not exempt from blame in this matter. In many cases, both in theory and practice, the church took over this pagan superstition. This is already evident in the case of the church fathers. Just as every person has his or her guardian angel, they said, so does each have his or her own demon. Outside Christianity the devil holds virtually unlimited sway. Redemption in Christ is, in the first place, liberation from the devil. All physical evil in the world—disease, crop failure, famine, plague, death—is attributable to Satan. He is the invisible cause of all idolatry, magic, astrology, heresy, unbelief. Superstition is based on demonic reality. While the largely shallow conversions of the people of Europe ensured the survival, under a Christian veneer, of all sorts of pagan teachings and practices, there was added, in the Middle Ages, the belief that the devil could appear in all sorts of guises (cats, mice, goats, swine, werewolves), create all sorts of vermin, engage as incubus and succubus in fornication, seduce people into covenants sealed with blood, bewitch them, enter into them, ride with them through the air, change them into animals, and stir up all sorts of misfortune also in the natural environment.

Rome has consistently defended the demonic reality of this superstition, not only in the Middle Ages (the bull of Innocent VIII, 1484; *Malleus maleficarum*, 1487) but also after the Reformation and right up to the present day. In Catholic theology, for example, that of Suárez, Vázquez, Lessius, Liguori, Görres, and others, belief in the power of the devil occupies an extraordinarily large place.⁶² And the extent to which superstition among Roman Catholics continues to live on in practice sadly came to light not long ago in the notorious history of Leo Taxil.⁶³ To Rome, all of existing reality is split between a lower (secular) and a higher (sacred) realm. In the former, Satan reigns with virtually unlimited power; the latter has to be protected from his influence and activity by the sign of the cross, holy water, exorcisms, and so on.⁶⁴ Catholic Christians see themselves threatened by the devil everywhere and have to take all sorts of measures to drive him away.⁶⁵

It is also true that Protestantism at the outset almost completely left this Catholic and basically pagan superstition intact. Belief in witches and witches' trails were as vigorously defended by Protestants as by Catholics⁶⁶ and were later opposed equally by Catholics (Spina, Molitor, Loos, Tanner, Spee) and Protestants

61. G. Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, II, 314ff.

62. P. Van Hoensbroeck, *Religion oder Aberglaube* (Berlin: Hermann Walther, 1897), 56ff.

63. H. Gerber, *Leo Taxils Palladsmusroman*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1897).

64. J. Deharbe, *Verklaring der katholieke Geloofs- en Zedeleer* (Utrecht, 1888), IV, 598ff.

65. T. Kolde, *Die kirchlichen Bruderschaften und das religiöse Leben im modernen Katholizismus* (Erlangen: n.p., 1895), 47.

66. O. Zöckler, "Hexen- und Hexenprozess," *PRE*³, VIII, 30–36.

(Weier [1563], Godelmann [1562], Reginald Scott [1584], van Dale [1685], Bekker [1691], Thomasius [1701]).⁶⁷ Following Luther's example, the Lutherans attributed extremely great power to the devil, deduced all evil from him, and maintained the practice of exorcism.⁶⁸ Still, the Reformation, especially its Calvinistic branch, brought about a significant change in belief in the devil. Going back to Scripture and not going beyond it, confessing the absolute sovereignty of God, it could not view Satan and his angels, however powerful, as anything other than creatures who without God's will cannot so much as move. The Reformation, let it be said, was not rationalistic. It maintained that there are evil spirits who exert an inward influence on people, especially on their imagination, and can even degrade them into their instruments. This power of Satan over humanity, however, is always subject to God's providence. It is primarily ethical in character and has its origin in sin. It is, moreover, restricted within narrow bounds. God, not Satan, is the Creator of light and darkness, good and evil. Sickness and death are sent to us by him (Isa. 45:7). Hebrews 2:14 only says that Satan possesses the power of death, since through sin he has brought death to dominion in the world and is therefore a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Our life, and the end of our life, is not in Satan's hand but in God's. Luke 13:11, 16, and 2 Corinthians 12:7 do not accord us the right to ascribe all sickness and evil to Satan. Moreover, Satan cannot create and produce something out of nothing, nor can he as incubus or succubus bring forth children; he cannot change humans into animals, kill, or bring back to life. He cannot immediately exert influence on the human intellect and will nor alter the substance or quality of things, and so on.⁶⁹

Only by a faith that conscientiously follows Scripture can we overcome the superstition that has struck such deep roots in the human heart and, despite all so-called intellectual development, keeps on reemerging. Rationalism first combated the inward operations of evil spirits in humans and subsequently the existence of such spirits. The result has been that, while belief in Scripture has been abandoned, superstition has not been rooted out. On the contrary, it is presently making its

67. Dr. W. P. C. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker, de Bestrijder van het Bijgeloof* ('s Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1906).

68. J. Köstlin, *Theology of Luther in Its Historical Development and Inner Harmony*, trans. Charles E. Hay, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), 410–19; ed note: This reference remains an educated conjecture, since Bavinck cites vol. II, pp. 351ff. in the German edition, which begins the index; vol. I, pp. 351ff. in the German, which includes a couple of indexed references to "Teufel" (pp. 354, 356), is the section on "Christian Liberty" (*De servo arbitrio; Wille und Prädestination*). In the English edition, this section covers pp. 410–19; J. T. Müller, *Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 8th ed. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1898), 477, 483, 771; G. Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, II, 364ff.; F. A. Philippi, *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*, 3rd ed., 7 vols. in 10 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1870–90), III, 341.

69. G. Voetius, *Select disp.*, I, 906ff.; A. Polanus, *Syn. theol.*, V, ch. 12; J. Zanchi, *De operum theologicorum*, 8 vols. (Geneva: Samuelis Crispini, 1617), III, 167–216; H. Bavinck, ed., *Synopsis purioris theologiae* (Leiden: D. Donner, 1881), XII, 36ff.; F. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, VII, qu. 5; P. van Mastricht, *Theologia*, III, ch. 8; J. J. Brahe, *Aanmerkingen over de vyf Walchersche Artikelen* (Middleburg: Callenfells, 1758), 195ff.; B. de Moor, *Comm. theol.*, II, 328; C. Vitringa, *Doctr. christ.*, II, 117ff.

debut—in the form of magnetism, hypnotism, telepathy, spiritism, astrology, and so on—especially in the circles of unbelief. Occultism, which throughout the ages has flourished among all peoples,⁷⁰ in this [nineteenth] century numbers its adherents in the millions and is even glorified as supreme wisdom in art and science. Also, vis-à-vis this modern superstition the foolishness of God is wiser than human beings. For not only cannot anything rational be said against the existence of fallen spirits, but also the possibility that they can lead people astray cannot be denied on a single solid ground. Just as human beings by their words and deeds, their example and conduct, exert influence on others, so there is nothing absurd in the idea that the fallen world of spirits exerts a deceptive influence on the imagination, intellect, and will of humans. Sometimes people object against this view that in that case people can always blame their faults on the devil, but this is also the case when a person is led astray by a fellow human. Furthermore, temptation always occurs along ethical channels and does not cancel out people's own guilt. And in circles where there is belief in the existence of fallen angels, the sense of guilt is usually not weaker than in places where their existence is denied. Belief in the devil simultaneously upholds both the appalling seriousness of sin and the human capacity for redemption. Our choice here is between "a devil outside of humanity or thousands of devils in human form."⁷¹ Manifest in people, sometimes, there is such fierce, conscious, and intentional hatred against God and all that is divine.⁷² There are children of God—and not the weakest or smallest but the most advanced, people who are foremost in the struggle and who live in the closest fellowship with God—who often complain of horrible temptations and inner assaults. They hint at such wicked thoughts suddenly arising in their hearts that it is a privilege to them to be allowed to believe in the existence of devils. There are "depths of Satan" that—in Scripture, in the history of humankind, in the struggle of the church of Christ, and in the experience of believers—sometimes in a flash become real to them.

One must realize in this connection that this sinful power forms a kingdom *like pathology a system of disease* that, in its opposition to God and his kingdom, operates systematically. If one were able to survey the whole of it, one would undoubtedly discover a plan of attack and defense in the history of its struggle. In the sinful life of the individual but much more in that of families, generations, peoples, and humanity as a whole throughout the ages, there is a deliberate methodical opposition to God and all that is his. And the leadership of this opposition is in the hands of him who is called in Scripture "the prince of this world" and the "god of this age." In that capacity he already made his appearance immediately in the temptation and fall of the first human being. In paganism he organized a power that stands opposed against all true religion, morality, and civilization. When Christ appeared on

70. C. Kiesewetter, *Geschichte des neueren Occultismus* (Leipzig: Friedrich, 1891); A. Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei* (Stuttgart, 1898; 2nd ed., 1908).

71. A. M. Weiss, *Apol. des Christ.*, II, 519.

72. *Ibid.*, II, 574–87.

earth, this "prince" concentrated his power against him, not only by assaulting him personally and persecuting him relentlessly, but also by surrounding him on all sides with demonic forces in order to thus break down and resist this work. The (demon-)possessed in the New Testament were not ordinary sick folk, even though symptoms of illness—deafness, muteness, epilepsy, dementia—also occurred among them. For each time they are clearly distinguished from ordinary sick folk (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 10:1; Mark 1:32; 3:15; Luke 13:32). The exceptional features of the (demon-)possessed are that out of their mouths speaks a subject other than they themselves, that this subject recognizes Jesus as the Son of God, is totally hostile toward him, and leaves the patient only at Jesus' command (Matt. 8:29, 31; Mark 1:26, 34; 3:11; Luke 4:34, 41; 8:2, 30; Acts 16:17–18; 19:15). Now this obsession, however appalling, is so far from being impossible that in hypnotism—where one person is subjected to the thought and will of another—we see the manifestation of an analogous phenomenon; further, that such cases of possession still occur today and that those who consider it impossible would also have to deny the soul's inner impact on the body and God's inward working on humans and the world. Satan mimics everything: God reveals himself in theophany (incarnation), prophecy, and miracle; the demonic caricature of these three, accordingly, is obsession, mantic, and magic. To this trio, Scripture for that reason repeatedly accords reality (Gen. 41:8; Exod. 7:12, 22; 8:7, 18–19; Num. 22; Josh. 24:10; 1 Sam. 6:2, 7–9; 2 Chron. 33:6; Isa. 47:9–12; Jer. 39:13; Nah. 3:4; Dan. 1:20; 2:10; Acts 8:9; 13:6–10; 16:16; etc.), a reality that it very firmly censures and prohibits (Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:10; Jer. 27:9; 2 Chron. 33:6; Mic. 5:12; Gal. 5:20), but that toward the end of history will once more be revealed by Satan in all its seductive power (1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:8–11; Rev. 9:1–11; 13:13–15; 19:20).⁷³

73. In addition to the previously cited literature on demonology, see also F. Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology*, trans. Robert E. Wallis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 293; J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Nördlingen: Beck, 1857–60), I, 445ff.; F. A. Philippi, *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*, III, 334ff.; F. A. Kahnis, *Die luthersche Dogmatik, historisch-genetisch dargestellt*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1861–68), I, 445ff.; J. T. Beck, *Vorlesungen über christliche Glaubenslehre*, 2 vols. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1896–97), II, 390ff.; *B. Weiss, *Das Leben Jesu*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1882), I, 454ff.; J. Kerner, *Geschichten Besessener neuerer Zeit: Beobachtungen aus dem Gebiete kakodämonisch-magnetischer Erscheinungen; Nebst Reflexionen von C. A. Eschenmayer über Besessenseyn und Zauber* (Stuttgart: Wachendorf, 1834); *D. F. Strauss, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken* (Leipzig: n.p., 1839); J. L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes: Being an Inductive Study of Phenomena of Our Own Times*, by Rev. John L. Nevius, D.D., for forty years a missionary to the Chinese, with an introduction by Rev. F. F. Ellinwood, D.D., 2nd ed. (New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896); G. Hafner, *Die Dämonischen des Neuen Testaments* (Frankfurt a.M.: Brechert, 1894); H. Lach, *Die Dämonischen des Neuen Testaments* (Leipzig: Richter, 1894); K. F. Zimmer, *Sünde oder Krankheit* (Leipzig, 1894); *J. A. H. van Dale, *Bezetenheid en krankzinnigheid* (Heusden, 1896); F. Chable, *Die Wunder Jesu in ihrem innern Zusammenhange betrachtet* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1897), II, 4, 45ff.; F. von Bodelschwingh, *Die Mitarbeit der Kirche an der Pflege der Geisteskranken* (Bielefeld: Schriftenniederlage der Anstalt Bethel, 1896), 13ff.; W. Menzies Alexander, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902); W. Ebstein, *Die Medizin im Neuen Testament und im Talmud* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1903); *B. Heyne, *Besessenheitswahn bei geistigen Errankungszuständen* (Paderborn, 1904); *Familler, *Pastoral-Psychiatrie* (Freiburg, 1888), 44.