

*All Glory to the
Only Good God*

All Glory to the Only Good God

Reformed Spirituality



HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Edited by
David J. Engelsma



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Preface

This third volume in the series of the Reformed spirituality of Herman Hoeksema (and, in this way, of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America) has as its theme the end, or goal, of true Reformed spirituality in the glory of the God of all goodness.

In this respect genuinely Reformed spirituality distinguishes itself from much that passes for Reformed spirituality in our day. Reformed, biblical spirituality does not end in the sanctified sinner and his experience. It certainly does not end in the unrelieved doubt of his own salvation on the part of the member of a Reformed church, as though such doubt is normal for professing Reformed Christians, indeed as though such doubt is commendable experience. Persistent doubters are gross sinners against the gospel of Jesus Christ, which they profess to believe. Doubters cannot glorify the only good God. Doubt is the antithesis of Christian and Reformed experience.

But neither does genuinely Reformed spirituality end in the joy and holiness of the elect believer.

Genuinely Reformed spirituality ends in glorifying God as the God of all goodness, both in himself and in all his dealings with the elect believer. Reformed devotion is experience and life that are devoted to God.

The title of this volume expresses the theme of the meditations that make up the book: *All Glory to the Only Good God*. Reformed spirituality gives *all* glory to God because the Reformed faith, which this book confesses in a devotional manner, ascribes *all* of salvation to God and his goodness. "Only" in the title especially modifies "good." God is only good, both in himself and in all his dealings with the elect believer.

The first meditation in the *Standard Bearer*, in which all the meditations making up this volume originally appeared, was that

on Psalm 145:9, 20, "Jehovah's Goodness" (*Standard Bearer* 1, no. 1 [October 1924], 1-2). Since the meditation was the front page of the magazine, the words "Jehovah's Goodness," were the first to be seen by the reader of the new magazine. There can be no doubt that this was deliberate on the part of the editors. This meditation is also first in this book.

As with the content of the preceding two volumes in this series, the devotional writing of Herman Hoeksema in this book is faithful, penetrating interpretation of Scripture. The reader therefore is instructed and moved by the word of God.

Devotional writing for Hoeksema did not mean the deliberate avoidance of sound doctrine. Spirituality is born of sound doctrine, for spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and soul of the child of God. And the Spirit works no otherwise than by sound doctrine. The shallow devotional writing so popular in our day, avoiding sound doctrine like the plague, is mere emotionalism.

There is also in this unique, Reformed spirituality exposure and condemnation of error that wages war against the precious experience of the believer. The exposition of Psalm 119:32, "When Thou Shalt Enlarge My Heart," exposes the theology of doubt of the Puritans and the resultant lack of assurance and careless life of multitudes of their disciples in certain streams of the Reformed tradition: "sickly souls."

Repeatedly Hoeksema observes and insists on the particularity of the goodness, grace, and blessing of God that lies on the surface of Holy Scripture, against the prevalent error that makes his goodness a common thing and therefore hardly the reason for the believer's glorifying God.

Some of the meditations date themselves. The devotional on Psalm 33:22, "Thy Mercy, O Lord," identifies itself as having been preached on New Year's morning 1940 and published soon thereafter. World War II had just begun, in September 1939, with Hitler's invasion of Poland. The preacher and author took note of this world-shaking event in order to demonstrate the right attitude of church and believer toward such earthly calamities. Although dated, the message is not outdated.

The style of the writing makes plain that the author himself experienced the work of the Spirit that he taught and exhorted on the reader. Certain of the meditations leave the poignant impression that Hoeksema, although faithfully explaining and applying the text, was at the same time baring his own soul. This is particularly true of his insightful description of Moses in the mount with God, when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. The meditation "I AM THAT I AM" is on Exodus 3:14. Whereas forty years earlier Moses had been confident of his ability to deliver Israel, of course with the help of God, now he is, in his own estimation, "a small Moses." Hoeksema's application, strained through his own experience as a deliverer of the people of God, is, "Our own glory must always be cast into the dust, so that we learn to glory in the Lord."

We take delight in sending out another volume of genuinely Reformed spirituality by the notable theologian, courageous churchman, marvelous preacher (all the meditations in this volume were originally preached to the large congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan), and believing, experiential child of God, Herman Hoeksema.

—DAVID J. ENGELSMA

PART I



God's Goodness in Himself

1

Jehovah's Goodness

"The Lord is good to all...but all the wicked will he destroy."—Psalm 145:9, 20

ACCORDING to the Hebrew original, the poet who is the inspired author of this psalm puts it emphatically: "Good is Jehovah."

The Lord is goodness essentially.

Apart from any relation to his creatures, conceived all by himself, in himself, and for himself, as the absolutely self-existent, self-sufficient, independent one, the Lord is good. His essence is goodness; his eternally adorable divine being is only good. Could we enter into the amazing profundity and explore the fathomless depths of his infinite being, the deepest depths of the incomprehensible divine essence would reveal nothing but goodness.

He is the light, and there is no darkness in him. He is truth, righteousness, holiness, purity, love, grace, mercy, eternal life, and there is no lie, unrighteousness, defilement, corruption, or death in him.

He is *Summum Bonum*, the highest good, not in a mere superlative sense, not in a sense that would compare him with other goods or goodnesses that might be conceived as existing next to him, although in a far inferior degree, but in the sense that he is the sole good, that there is no good apart from him or without him. He is the ultimate and absolute criterion of all good. He is not good in the sense that he answers to a certain standard of goodness that might be applied to him, but he himself is the only standard of all that is called good.

He is good because he is God.

Very perfection in all his adorable virtues.
 Good is Jehovah!



The Lord is good.

Because the being of his adorable Godhead is goodness, the divine nature in all the glorious attributes thereof is purest perfection and immaculate goodness. Neither is there any reason of want in God that he would need an object unto which to reveal and upon which to lavish his goodness, for as the triune God he lives from everlasting to everlasting the perfect life of infinite goodness in and through himself. Never there arises from the unfathomable depths of his perfect essence the slightest thought that is not good, perfect, and true. Never the faintest thrill of imperfection there is in the will of Jehovah. Never the most imperceptible discord there is in his divine feeling. Never the tiniest ripple of evil there is on the stream of life flowing from his divine heart.

No shadow of darkness ever bedims the light of life, perfect and infinite, of the divine family. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each eternally subsisting in the unchangeable essence of limitless goodness, thinking in the perfect mind, willing with the perfect will, are living in absolute self-sufficiency an uninterrupted divine life of purest goodness, dwelling in a light that is never bedimmed.

Yea, good is Jehovah!

Everlastingly, solely, unchangeably good.

Because the Lord is good, the absolute good in himself, he is also good to all his creatures.

Good is Jehovah to all.



Jehovah is the overflowing fount of all good.

All the good his creatures receive is solely from him and is only good because he is good, and he assumes an attitude of goodness to them. He is full of richest benevolence, which he lavishes in profuse abundance upon the whole creation. His goodness propels the silvery luster throughout the starry heavens and arranges their marvelous harmony night upon night. His goodness bedecks the sun with the glorious attire of wondrous gold day after day. His

goodness adorns the lily of the field with the purest beauty such as Solomon never possessed and clothes the royal cedars of Lebanon with strength and majesty. His goodness causes the royal eagle to renew its strength as it sweeps the firmament with powerful wing and fills the mouth of the young raven crying to him for food. His goodness remembers the roaring lion and the chirping sparrow on the housetop. His goodness clothes the meadows in velvety green and covers the fields with golden grain. His goodness made man a little lower than the angels, adds keenness to his mind, strength to his arm, and fills his heart with gladness.

Surely all the works of Jehovah's hand speak of his goodness.
Good is Jehovah to all!



Nor is this the last word about Jehovah's goodness.

It may be the last word in the estimation of natural religion that knows of no sin and speaks of no grace.

It might be the last word had paradise not been lost. There in the midst of that Edenic virgin beauty of creation, in that original state of unmarred perfection, where sin had not dropped its strain, misery had not left its scar, and the groan of the sufferer was not heard—there God's goodness displayed itself simply as goodness, overflowing riches of benevolence, poured upon every creature according to the measure of its capacity.

The single light-beam of Jehovah's goodness had not resolved into the many-colored rays of his grace, tender mercy, and loving-kindness in contrast with his holy wrath and faultless justice.

But sin entered, and in the wake of sin came death. With death followed suffering in all its awful forms—agony of soul and body, pain, sorrow, grief, and fear. The curse of God was pronounced upon the creature and subjected it to vanity; the chilling breath of a good God, maintaining himself in his goodness over against a sinful world, caused the whole creation to groan and travail together in pain. Even thus the creature made subject to vanity and man in his guilt, bending under the cruel scourge of suffering and death, are testimonies that Jehovah is good and that there is no evil in him.

But more must be said.

Suffering creation, sin and guilt, misery and death, and all the

thick darkness from hell only became the occasion for God to manifest his goodness more abundantly. Darkness was employed by him as a prism through which to resolve the pure white beam of his goodness into wonderful rays of manifold perfection. On the occasion of sin and suffering, there is the beautiful and rich manifestation of God's wonderful mercy and loving-kindness. His tender mercies are over all his works.

Radiating from the cross of God's beloved Son, this tender mercy beams its warm glory first upon his chosen people whom he loved with love everlasting, with a love that is always first. Upon them he lavishes his tender mercy in the blood pouring from the heart of his only begotten, and in these streams of mercy he cleanses them from guilt, heals them from sin, redeems them from the power of death, comforts them forever for their misery, and makes them heirs of an unspeakable glory, of a life incomparably richer, fuller, and deeper than the first paradise ever knew. They taste his loving-kindness and tender mercy, speak of it and sing of it, showing forth the praises of him who called them from darkness into his marvelous light.

But even as the awful darkness of sin and misery spread from the first Adam until it enshrouded an entire groaning creation in its horrors, so that glad light of redemption radiates from the second Adam and falls first upon the elect, thence to spread again over the whole creation. Remembering his groaning creature with bowels of mercy and compassion, Jehovah stretches the rainbow of an everlasting covenant over all. His tender mercies are over all his works.

The creature is made subject to vanity. It is subject to the yoke of bondage. It is travailing in pain together until now.

But in hope!

The whole creation will be liberated from the bondage of corruption and be made to partake of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Bowels of mercy! The Lord is good to all. His tender mercy is over all his works.



Good is Jehovah.

But all the wicked will he destroy.

Seemingly there is irreconcilable conflict here. The Lord is good, and yet he destroys. Many a sinful mind will not have it so. Many would dream of goodness without righteousness, of grace without justice, and of benevolence without holy wrath. Yet upon closer investigation this apparent conflict disappears and dissolves into the most sublime harmony. He will destroy all the wicked because he is good. The destruction of the wicked, God's wrath upon them, is another aspect of his perfect goodness.

The wicked are the vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction. They love iniquity and hate righteousness. God is not in all their thoughts. They say within their hearts, express in their words, and reveal in their ways that there is no God. They are God's enemies and children of their father the devil. They dwell in darkness and love it. They crucify Christ and persecute his people. They make the measure of their iniquity full.

So are all the wicked.

But the Lord is good. And because he is good and there is no evil in him, because he is a light and there is no darkness in him, his soul loves the righteous and loathes the wicked. His face beams with tender mercy upon those who love him, but burns with fierce wrath upon those who love iniquity. He preserves the righteous, but destroys all the wicked.

Jehovah is good. Therefore there are in him bowels of mercy and consuming fires of holy wrath.

Hallelujah!

2

I AM THAT I AM

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you.”—Exodus 3:14

I AM THAT I AM!

This is my name.

Such was the answer the man of God received in the mount of God when he inquired after the name of him who sent him, Moses, to the people of Israel to deliver them out of their bondage.

A very small and humiliated Moses it was who met the Lord through the revelation of the burning bush, a revelation as comforting and assuring as it was marvelous. Moses here stood in trembling reverence on holy ground, having learned deeply to feel his own insignificance, unworthiness, and incapability to accomplish what the Most High had ordained and to which he now called him.

Forty years ago he had felt so entirely different.

Then he had made his choice, and his choice had been right and well-pleasing to the Lord, the fruit of God's gracious and efficacious call in the heart of the man of God. Then he had disdained to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he had forsaken the treasures of Egypt that were freely offered him; he had chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. Then he had set out to fight for their cause, to defend them against the cruel oppression of the Egyptian overseers, and he had slain him who would whip his brethren.

But he had not realized that the work of defending and delivering the brethren must be solely the Lord's: that the Most High had in Egypt the vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, in whom not

the power and wrath of Moses but the glory of the Almighty must be revealed, and the vessels of mercy through and upon whom the Lord of all would manifest his alone-glorious grace and the mercies of his covenant. Moses had then been full of zeal to deliver the people from bondage and confident that with the Lord's help and the people's rallying around the banner of insurrection, he would meet with success.

How different had been the outcome!

The people had not responded, but had spurned his zeal and threatened to turn against him; the Lord had not revealed his power from heaven; and a miserable Moses had been compelled to flee from the wrath of the king.

Forty years had passed. Forty years of solitude for the man of God, spent in quiet seclusion behind the flock of his father-in-law Jethro; years of inactivity, radically different from the first period of his life, when in Pharaoh's court he had been educated and trained; years apparently calculated to make him forever unfit to accomplish the superhuman task unto which he had been ordained from before the foundation of the world; yet years of invaluable training to prepare him as an instrument for the manifestation of the Lord's glory. During those years of quiet shepherd life, no doubt given to much meditation upon the Lord's ways and promises, Moses had not regretted his choice; he had never longingly looked back to the pleasures that might have been his, nor had he ceased to look forward to the realization of the Lord's promises and to pray for the deliverance of his brethren. But the last vestige of self-confidence had surely been obliterated from his heart and mind. He had learned to look upon the attempt of forty years ago, upon the zeal of his youth, as folly; he had been made to see that only the wondrous power of the Most High could deliver the people of Israel from the house of bondage, and more and more his impotence and insignificance had become clear to his consciousness.

As is evident from his attitude at the mount of God when the Lord calls him to deliver his people, he feels himself totally unfit for the Lord's work.

He has become a very small Moses.

Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?

Who am I that I should deliver the children of Israel?

I am unfit. I have no prestige. The people will not believe me. I am not eloquent, but slow of speech; Lord, send whom thou would, but not me, for of all men I am the most incapable.

Apparently he had been spoiled by the forty years of solitude; he had lost his zeal and courage.

Yet it was not so. He had only learned to know himself and acknowledge his own incompetence. He had become a small Moses, and because of it, he had become a fit medium for the revelation of the glory of the Lord.

Our own glory must always be cast into the dust, so that we learn to glory in the Lord.

Before we will anxiously ask, "Who art thou, what is thy name, Lord?" we must in self-abasement cry out, "O Lord, who am I?"

Before we reach out for the rock of our salvation, we must know that in ourselves we are perishing in the waves. Then our soul will reach out for him. Then we will ask, "What is thy name?" And always the answer will come, "I AM THAT I AM."



Lord, thy name!

It is the outcry of Moses' soul.

He does not express it thus. Rather, he puts the question in the mouths of the people to whom he must go. They will ask him for the name of the one who sent him.

Yet in the question Moses expresses the need of his soul to draw near to the being of his sender and the deliverer of his brethren. Not to distinguish the Lord from other gods does he ask the question, neither to become acquainted with the sound of the name Jehovah, for the fathers had long called upon him by that name. But Moses' humble soul, filled with a sense of weakness and helplessness, would reach out for the heart of God.

What is his name?

The name of God is his being. It is himself revealed to us.

Such is the significance of a name in general. With us—dead through sins and trespasses, darkened spiritually, and having only a small remnant of our once-glorious gifts—the name no longer has that meaning. Names for us have become mere sounds. Through sin we have lost that intuitive knowledge we once possessed in the

state of original righteousness, through which we were able to discern the names of created things. But this does not alter the fact that everything has its own name, and that this name is essentially the manifestation of its being. For the Most High made all things by the Word, and without the Word nothing was made that was created. Creation is the embodiment of the thoughts of God. Every creature is one of his words, and that word of God is the creature's name. In the state of righteousness man possessed the power to read these words of God and know his thoughts.

God has a name, not in the sense of a distinguishing mark according to which he can be compared with or distinguished from other beings in the same order. For God is one. The Most High is God alone, and there is no God beside him. There was neither God before him, nor will there be a God after him. He stands alone, he cannot be compared, neither needs he a name to distinguish himself from other gods.

But in his name is his being, the revelation of his glorious divine nature. Essentially his name is the Son, the eternal Logos, the Word, the everlasting effulgence of his glory, the express image of his eternal substance, the name that is known and expressed in the divine fullness of infinite glory by himself alone. But there is also a name of God by which we can know him and apprehend him and have fellowship with him. For he revealed himself in all his works—in creation, in history, in his boundless grace, and centrally in God incarnate, Immanuel, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he was pleased to give himself names, sounds of human language, by which we can know him, stand face-to-face with him, address him, speak of him, and glorify him.

Always the name is the being, the revelation of God to us.

Hence we have the frequent identification of the name of God with himself. The Scriptures say that God's name is near, meaning that he himself is with us. They speak of trusting in his name, of believing in his name, of calling upon his name, of praising his holy name, which are the same as trusting and believing in him, calling upon him, and praising his glorious being.

Thus Moses' purpose in asking for the name becomes clear.

A tremendous task is placed upon his shoulders. And who is he? A trembling, wretchedly weak, and insignificant worm, a nonentity,

devoid of all power and wisdom and courage in himself.

Will not the people to whom he is sent feel as he?

He cannot stand alone. He is totally incapable of going in his own name and power.

He reaches out for the Rock so his soul can cling to him.

He would find in God that of which he knows himself to be void.

Lord, reveal thyself. Let me cling to thee.

Draw near to me in the power of thy being.

Thy name, Lord.

I AM!



I AM THAT I AM.

Of all the names of God there is no name like unto this name, no name that more fully and centrally expresses the divinity of the divine than *the* name.

I AM. Jehovah. The name he reveals again and in all the blessedness of sovereign and sure mercies in the name Jesus: Jehovah-salvation!

It reveals the Most High to us; in it he draws near to us in his eternal self-existence, self-being. No creature can say as he: My name is I *am*. I can say, I am what I am determined to be, I am what I am made, I am as I am born, I am what others make of me, what circumstances make of me, what rain and sunshine, climate and circumstances, friends and enemies, sickness and health, riches and poverty, peace and war, prosperity and adversity, and a thousand other agencies over which I have not the least control make of me. I am not, I became. I am not, I exist. I am not, for the source of my being is outside of me. I am not, for I am flitting away like a shadow. I was not what I am, I will not be what I am. As soon as I say I am, I am no more. I am but an atom, an infinitesimally small part of a whole, on that whole dependent, and without that whole not able to be. Lord, what stinking pride, what detestable conceit, what abominable folly it must be in thy sight when I, a mere worm, a flitting shadow, an inexpressibly insignificant dust particle, trust in self and exalt myself against thee!

But God is.

His name is I AM.

He is the self-existent.

He is such in his being. No cause had he outside of himself. Nothing caused him, nothing formed him, and he is the sole cause of all. Nothing bears him up, and he bears all. He is the uncaused cause of all, the unsustained sustainer of all, the unconceived conceiver of all, the unwilled will of all. He is what he is. Though all else disappears into nothingness, he still is; though all else collapses, he still stands. He alone is independent. There are no powers and forces, no incidents or circumstances, no agencies or influences that determine him. He alone determines all things with most absolute sovereignty. He is such in all his life, his will, his wisdom, his counsel, the alone unnecessitated necessity of all. His will alone is free, his counsel alone is uncounseled, and his own being is the sole reason for all God ever wills and does.

He is the immutable, the eternal.

He is that he is! He is fully all that he is forever and ever, the eternally perfect one. With perfect fullness he lives the infinite perfection of his divine life continuously. Therefore he is eternally the same. To infinite perfection you cannot add. From infinite perfection you cannot subtract. Infinite perfection cannot grow and increase, nor can it decrease and be diminished. What he is, that is he, now and forevermore and before the world was.

Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM.

The everlasting rock.

O blessed God of my salvation, only adorable Jehovah, thy name, please, let me know. Draw near unto my wretched and sinful soul, weak and helpless, and let me know thee. Stamp thy name by almighty grace indelibly upon my sin-stained mind, upon my proud heart, that all my imagined freewill and self-will, my conceit and abominable haughtiness, may be rooted out and abased before thee and I can always know that I am only dust of the balance, a drop of the bucket. Let me taste the sweet consolation of clinging with all the grace-wrought tendrils of my heart to thee.

Speak to my soul: I, Jehovah, the immutable, eternal, self-being, sovereign, faithful I AM, will be with you.

Then I will not be afraid.

Then I will go and face the terrible tyrant of Egypt and proclaim

before him thy name, honor before him thy sovereign will, and confidently demand of him that he let thy people go. Then I, a mere worm, will not fear the stubbornness of a stiff-necked people, but will face them and speak to them of thy everlasting covenant. Thou and I. No, thou through me. I nothing, thou all. Then I will go and do thy will. Lord, what is thy name? Come near and let my soul reach out for the everlasting rock.

Thou through me.

Then call me, in the midst of a sinful, hostile world, to be thine, to be of thy party, over against the powers of darkness, sin, the devil, and the host of spiritual wickedness in high places. Call me, as thou callest thy people, to come out of them, to have no fellowship with them, to declare thy name and extol thy virtues before them.

Thou with me...

And I shall not be afraid.

For I know that thou lovest me with an independent love, for reasons of thine own. I know that thy sovereign love is immutable. I know that thou can and surely will deliver me.

Jehovah!

Rock of my salvation!

3

The Name

“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.”—Exodus 34:6–7

AWFUL Sinai!

Mount that could be touched, yet might not, on penalty of death for man or beast.

Mount that rumbled with the voice of judgment, that burned with fire, and that was enveloped in blackness and darkness, and around whose rugged peak the terrible tempest raged.

Mount of the ever-blessed God, revealing himself in all the majesty of his Godhead to a sinful, stiff-necked people, who for a while stood trembling at the mountain's base, hearing the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words, entreating that the word should be spoken to them no more.

Mount of Jehovah.

There Moses, the mediator of the old dispensation, stood in the presence of the eternal glory, the reflection of which glittered with dreadful beauty in his face, without, however, seeing him who is invisible. There the Most High, God who is God, spoke directly with his servant, who mediated for his people in the valley, as the law was imposed upon the promise and the covenant was clothed in the form of precepts, every tittle and iota of which must be fulfilled before the freedom of faith and justification could come. There before Moses' wondering eyes, Jehovah engraved upon rock tablets the ten words that were to be hidden in the ark of the covenant and covered by the mercy seat.

Mount of God's covenant, from whose dreadful darkness the people of God would throughout the old dispensation look forward to the everlasting light of Mount Zion.

There a stiff-necked and rebellious people violated the covenant of God. In the sight of the smoking and quaking mount and the terrible darkness, when the echo of that dreadful voice they begged to speak to them no more had hardly died away in the stillness of the wilderness, they gladly stripped themselves of their gold in order to make a god of their own imagination, and they danced around the golden calf in drunken abandonment. In the very presence of the living God they chose the vanity of the heathen; to the awful God of the terrible voice they preferred a god upon whom they could impose their own will; definitely and ultimately they violated the covenant. The awful mount would pursue them, destroy them in the desert, harass them in the promised land, chase them into captivity, seal their damnation when they crucified the Lord of glory, scatter them among the nations, and assign them their place in lowest hell. For the God they would not serve will by no means clear the guilty.

Dreadful Mount Sinai.

There Moses, the servant of the Lord, the meekest man on the face of the earth, yet who lacked sufficient meekness to lead the people of God into the promised inheritance, thus pointing to and waiting for the meeker than the meek, pleaded with the Lord of Sinai not to execute his awful threat to destroy this rebellious people, beseeched him rather to blot out Moses' name from the book of life, pleaded on the basis of Jehovah's immutable covenant and unchangeable glory.

And there Jehovah, the I AM, the immutable rock, repented.

There the faithful, covenant God renewed his promise that he would send his angel before them and realize his every promise to his people Israel. But there he also taught his servant to understand that he would show mercy to whom he would show mercy and would be gracious to whom he is gracious.

There the servant of Jehovah and mediator of the old covenant, hardly knowing what he asked for, uttered in the presence of the invisible the awful prayer, "Show me now thy glory."

And there the Lord heard even this prayer.

There he hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and passed by his servant, hiding him with his own hand, so that seeing God Moses would not perish.

And there the Lord announced his name.
Dreadful Mount Sinai!



The name.

The Lord, the Lord God.

Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

And that will by no means clear the guilty.

The name of the ever-blessed God, full of hope and blessing, yet apparently hopeless; announcing never-failing forgiveness, yet threatening with never-bending justice; forgiving, yet imputing sin; opening vistas of life, yet shutting them off by the darkness of death; taking a sinful people into the everlasting glories of heaven, yet casting them down to lowest hell; forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet who will by no means clear the guilty.

Blessed name, glorious name of the Lord, the Lord God.

Awful name, dreadful name of the wholly other.

Paradoxical name, which immediately causes us to look for still another name under heaven by which the paradox can be solved.

The name!



Blessed name.

Merciful and gracious.

Gracious is the Lord, for he is in himself the perfection of beauty, and in his right hand there are pleasures forevermore. All that is in him is pleasant to behold, to know, to experience, to taste. He is gracious absolutely in himself, apart from any relation to his creatures, and as the triune God he knows and contemplates himself eternally in all the beauty and attraction of his infinite perfection. He delights in himself with divine pleasure. He is gracious to his people and looks with everlasting favor upon Zion, the perfection

of beauty, and causes his people to delight in him, to taste his grace, and to acknowledge that his loving-kindness is better than life. In the knowledge of him, in the experience of his favor and loving-kindness, they are blessed in his fellowship forever.

To bless them with himself, his presence and fellowship, with life eternal, is his everlasting purpose, for he is merciful.

His mercy is his will to bless, the eternal will to lead his people into the highest possible glory in his tabernacle. In relation to himself he is also merciful, for he is the ever-blessed God who wills to be blessed as the highest good. His eternal purpose is to reveal himself, to make himself known, to cause himself to be experienced and to be acknowledged by his people as the only and ever-blessed God in whose presence and communion there is fullness of joy. Hence he longs with an eternal longing to lift his people from their present misery of sin and death into the everlasting glory of heavenly perfection. In his mercy he is tenderly affected toward them and gently cares for them until they are perfectly delivered.

And he is longsuffering over them.

Slow to anger.

When they sin he does not immediately strike them down in wrath, but he remembers his mercy that he eternally purposed to reveal in Jesus Christ. Patiently he bears with them. He chastises them in his love, as a father chastises his children, to correct them. After they have been exercised, they reap the fruits of righteousness. When they suffer, he is long of passion and, rather than take them out of this present misery and woe, he patiently waits until all things have been fully prepared.

For abundant in goodness is he.

Zealous he is over his people to do them good. He loves them with all the love of his infinite being, constantly, eternally; and he burns with zeal to bestow upon them all the blessedness of his covenantal friendship.

Nor can his mercy fail. For he is also abundant in truth. He is the amen. The rock. He is as he is immutably. Everlastingly. And he reveals himself as he is. His promises are yea and amen.

This God is our God, forever and ever.

He will be our guide even unto death.

The Lord, the Lord God.
Blessed name!



Amazing paradox.

Keeping mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, yet never and in no wise clearing the guilty.

He keeps mercy. He never forgets his mercy to his people. Neither does he ever fail to reveal his mercy to them. His mercy is not spasmodic, nor is the revelation of his mercy periodic. It is constant, for it is everlasting. He keeps it to thousands, that is, from generation to generation, even until the end.

And in his mercy he forgives. For his people commit iniquity and transgression and sin.

By nature they are perverse, a rebellious people, inclined to oppose God's yes by their foolish and wicked no. Upon their own no, in opposition and denial of God's yes, they are inclined to act, and they transgress his commandment and violate his holy law. Thus they sin. They miss the mark, God's purpose, and trample underfoot the holiness of his glorious name. They become worthy of his wrath and everlasting damnation in themselves. But he forgives. He dismisses their iniquities, their transgressions, their sins from his mind and heart. He never remembers them as sins, so they never provoke him to anger and displeasure with regard to his people. He does not impute sin unto them, so that he does not execute his wrath upon them. Rather than cast them down into lowest perdition, of which they are worthy, he lifts them up into the heavenly glory and crowns them with blessed and eternal life.

Oh, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.

Yet he never clears the guilty, for righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

If any man sins, God will never pronounce him guiltless. If a man transgresses God's commandment, he will never justify that man in his transgression. If a man misses the mark and falls short of the glory of God, never will he forget or forgive, never will he excuse him who tramples his glory underfoot.

For God will not give his glory to another. He will demand the last farthing.

He forgives, yet never clears the guilty.
Astounding paradox!



Adorable mystery.

He who never clears the guilty forgives all our iniquities, our transgressions, and our sins.

The paradox is solved in the profound mystery of the cross, in the moment when awful Sinai and blessed Zion meet on Golgotha. When the righteousness and the mercy, the justice and the grace, the terror and the blessedness, the death and the life, the hell and the heaven of the awful name of the blessed God, meet in sweetest harmony in the only name given under heaven whereby man can be saved.

Jesus.

The Lord. The Lord God.

Immanuel. God with us forever and ever.

The Lord, merciful and gracious, yet righteous and just; forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty.

For such is Golgotha.

Mount Sinai must be superimposed upon Zion, the law upon the promise, righteousness upon grace, justice upon goodness, wrath upon mercy, until he came who would do what the children of the promise themselves could never do: fulfill the law, satisfy righteousness, bear the wrath of God, and lift Sinai that genders to bondage from the top of Zion that is free, lift death from life, and liberate Zion's children forever!

Marvelous grace and mercy.

Perfect righteousness and justice.

No, he never clears the guilty, yet he mercifully forgives all our transgressions.

The mercy of God is not that he winks at sin and allows his word to be set aside, his law to be violated, and his glory to be trampled underfoot. The wonder of God's everlasting goodness and grace is not that he loves the ungodly, blesses them, and makes

them the objects of his favor. But the wonder of God's everlasting goodness and grace is that from before the foundation of the world he appointed unto Zion a mighty captain of salvation who would be able to bear all Zion's sin and to bear it away forever on the accursed tree,

He himself bore our sin in his own body on the tree, that by his stripes we could be healed.

He does not clear the ungodly, but justifies them in the blood of his Son.

Jesus, Immanuel, God with us.

Golgotha, union of everlasting mercy and immutable justice.

Sweet harmony.



The name.

The Lord. The Lord God.

Oh, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord and who trust in his holy name.

For he is God. The mighty one. He is strong to save and to accomplish all his merciful purpose for those who love him. His grace and mercy, his longsuffering and abundant goodness, are not weak and impotent desires of the heart, incapable or even doubtful of realization. He is not a man, that his purposes can be frustrated, that his arm can be shortened, and that his power can fail.

God is he! And if God be for us, who will be against us?

It is God who justifies. Who will lay anything to the charge of his elect?

And he is Jehovah. The Lord. The self-existent. The unchangeable I AM. The wholly independent. He who is of himself, by himself, and for himself. Independent in his mercy and grace, with respect to their origin, with regard to their objects, with regard to their realization. Immutable mercies!

Lord, we pray thee, go among us.

Thou overflowing fount of good.

Hallelujah! Amen!