

THE  
PRACTICE  
OF  
FAITH, HOPE,  
AND LOVE



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THE  
PRACTICE  
OF  
FAITH, HOPE,  
AND LOVE

Godefridus Udemans



Translated by Annemie Godbehere

Edited by Joel R. Beeke



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## Series Preface

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**T**he *Nadere Reformatie* (a term translated into English as either the “Dutch Second Reformation” or the “Further Reformation”) paralleled the historical and spiritual development of English Puritanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From its teachers came the watchword of post-Reformation piety: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (“The church always being reformed”).

Proponents of the *Nadere Reformatie* used that phrase to indicate their commitment to the doctrinal and ecclesiological reforms of the Reformation of the sixteenth century as well as to the ongoing reformation of the church. Their intent was not to alter Reformed doctrine. Rather, they proposed the development of a life of piety based on that doctrine within Reformed churches that, in turn, would impact all spheres of life.

Dutch scholars responsible for a periodical on the *Nadere Reformatie* recently formulated the following definition of the movement:

The Dutch Further Reformation is that movement within the Dutch Reformed Church during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which, as a reaction to the declension or absence of a living faith, made both the personal experience of faith and godliness matters of central importance. From

that perspective the movement formulated substantial and procedural reformation initiatives, submitting them to the proper ecclesiastical, political, and social agencies, and pursued those initiatives through a further reformation of the church, society, and state in both word and deed.<sup>1</sup>

To further their program of active personal, spiritual, ecclesiastical, and social reformation, the writers of the *Nadere Reformatie* produced some of the finest, most profound literature in the Protestant tradition. Furthermore, because the Dutch Reformed piety of the seventeenth century grew out of Reformed orthodoxy and included among its founders and exponents several erudite orthodox theologians—such as Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Johannes Hoornbeeck—the works of the *Nadere Reformatie* do not give evidence of the kind of antagonism between theology and piety that belonged to the Pietist phase of German Lutheranism. Rather, the proponents of the *Nadere Reformatie* offered a balance of doctrine and piety as well as theology and life that has seldom been equaled in church history.

The *Nadere Reformatie* has generally been overlooked in English-speaking circles due to the lack of primary sources in English. The numerous works of famous dogmaticians such as Voetius and Hoornbeeck or of pastors such as Theodorus à Brakel and Jodocus van Lodenstein have remained untranslated until now. Exceptions are Alexander Comrie's *ABC of Faith*, first published in English in 1978; Wilhelmus à Brakel's *Christian's Reasonable Service*, translated into English and published in four volumes in 1992–1995; and those volumes published in this present series.

The present series addresses the need for further translation of these “old writers,” as they are affectionately called by those who know them in Dutch. It also contributes significant biblical and historical insights to the contemporary emphasis on discipleship and spirituality.

In this series, the editors and translators present a representative sampling of the writings of this vibrant movement, along with introductions that open both the texts and the lives of the various authors to the modern reader. The series is intended for the lay reader as well as for pastors and scholars, all of whom should benefit

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1. *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 19 (1995): 108.



from this introduction to the literature of the *Nadere Reformatie* movement, much as the Dutch have benefited from the translation of numerous English Puritan works into their language.

On behalf of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society,  
Joel Beeke  
James A. De Jong  
Richard Muller



Godefridus Cornelis Udemans (c. 1581–1649)

# Introduction

**G**odefridus Cornelis Udemans (c. 1581–1649) was one of the most influential Dutch Further Reformation divines of his generation. With the exception of Willem Teellinck (1579–1629), no seventeenth-century theologian from the Zeeland province exerted greater influence upon his contemporaries than Udemans, the preacher from Zierikzee. Through his preaching and writing, Udemans promoted Reformed piety in Zeeland and neighboring provinces for nearly half a century.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This article is primarily a compilation drawn from the following Dutch sources: W. Fieret, *Udemans: Facetten uit zijn leven en werk* (Houten: Den Hertog, 1985); P. J. Meertens, “Godefridus Cornelisz. Udemans,” *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 28 (1935): 65–106; W. J. op ’t Hof, “Godefridus Udemans,” in *Het blijvende Woord*, ed. J. van der Haar, A. Bergsma, L. M. P. Scholten (Dordrecht: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, 1985), 222–25; B. W. Steenbeek, “Udemans, Godefridus,” in *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, ed. D. Nauta, et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1978), 1:385–86; A. Vergunst, *Godefridus Cornelisz Udemans en zijn ’t Geestelijk Roer van ’t Coopmans Schip* (Utrecht: Theol. Instituut, 1970). Thanks to Adam Slingerland for his translation assistance and to Den Hertog for supplying illustrations. See also F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 124–26.



Haamstede, the first place where Udemans served as preacher

## Life

Godefridus Udemans was born at Bergen op Zoom in 1581 or 1582 into a Reformed family. His father played a significant role in helping found the Reformed church at Bergen op Zoom. Godefridus was converted in his youth and may have studied theology under his spiritual father, Marcus Zuerius, a seasoned minister of good reputation at Bergen op Zoom. Zuerius was also the grandfather of Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612–1653), who became a professor of theology at Leiden. Udemans retained a close friendship with his teacher until Zuerius's death.

Udemans sustained his classical examinations for ministerial candidacy on April 19, 1599. Seven months later, he accepted a pastoral call from Haamstede. A week later, on November 23, Classis Schouwen examined and admitted him into the ministry of the Reformed churches. He was ordained on December 12, succeeding Jan Cornelis Kempe, who had died early in that year. Initially, the young minister received some opposition, but when he received a pastoral call to the Reformed church in Zierikzee in 1602, the congregation opposed his departure. Ultimately, the civil authorities of the Zeeland province intervened. On April 11, 1604, nearly two years after being called, he was finally installed in Zierikzee, where



James Arminius, professor at Leiden whose theology was embraced by the Remonstrants

he served the church faithfully for forty-five years. On January 29, 1613, he married Magdalena Stoutenburg (c. 1582–1662), daughter of the mayor of Brouwershaven. In 1620, the Udemans family was blessed with twins.

Udemans died at Zierikzee on January 20, 1649, still active in the ministry in his late sixties. He was buried in the St. Lievensmonster tower, of Zierikzee.

## **Influence**

### *Appointments*

Udemans was a major influence on the Dutch Reformed church in his day in a variety of ways. Due to his diversity of gifts, both ecclesiastical and civil authorities called upon him to serve on various committees and in other capacities.

Udemans became involved in the Remonstrant (Arminian) debate early on. In 1616, Udemans and Herman Faulkelius (1560–1625), author of *The Compendium* (a shortened version of the Heidelberg Catechism), were delegated by the Zeeland churches to go to Amsterdam to meet with deputies from other districts for the purpose of organizing the contours of a national synod. The following year, at the request of Prince Maurice, Udemans, together with Antonius Walaeus (1573–1639) and



Johannes Bogerman, chairman of the Synod of Dort

Jacobus Trigland (1583–1654), served the congregation of 's-Gravenhage as ministers on loan. In 1618, Udemans received a similar appointment to serve the Dome Church at Utrecht for two months. There, together with three other ministers, he wrote the Utrecht Church Order of 1619, the same year in which the Church Order of Dort was written.

In 1618, the Provincial Synod of Zeeland chose Udemans as one of its delegates for the National Synod of Dort, where Johannes Bogerman served as chairman. Though Udemans was still in his thirties, respect for him and his gifts were so extensive, he was chosen as vice president of that august body. Additionally, the synod assigned him several tasks:

- to organize the sessions of the commission that was assigned to develop a doctrinal statement regarding the five points of doctrinal difference between the Reformed and the Remonstrants;
- to serve on the committee appointed to compare the Latin, French, and Dutch texts of the Belgic Confession of Faith; and



's-Hertogenbosch and its surroundings,  
where Udemans frequently served

- to serve on the committee mandated to compose two small catechism booklets.

After the famed international synod was over, the Reformed church at Dordrecht called Udemans in 1620 to be its pastor. He declined this call, as well as several calls from 's-Hertogenbosch, a city to which he felt very attached. When that city was conquered by Dutch troops in 1629, Udemans was sent with Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) and several other ministers to introduce Reformed doctrine in the capital city of Brabant, a task to which Udemans devoted several months.

### *Writings*

Udemans wrote approximately twenty books in his lifetime; he also translated four books that he saw through the press. Over the centuries, his books have been reprinted in Dutch about one hundred times. These reprints continue until the present day. Five of his books have been translated into German. *The Practice of Faith, Hope, and Love* was his first book in English. Hopefully, more will follow.

Udemans's writings may be divided into two categories: experientially edifying books and polemical books.

### Experientially edificatory works

Most of Udemans's books were written to promote godly piety, revealing him to be an authentic Dutch Further Reformation divine. He generally focused on themes that touched the ordinary believer's inner, experiential life. That is true already of his first book, "Christian Meditations, which the Believer Ought to Engage In Each Day, Provided for Each Day of the Week" (1608)<sup>2</sup>; Udemans asserts that believers should meditate on matters that concern our salvation on a daily basis. Meditation provides spiritual nutrition for the soul. It strengthens our faith, increases our knowledge, arouses zealous prayer, and kindles fruits of godliness. Beginning with Monday, Udemans provides meditations for each day of the week, using this weekly sequence of subject matter: "about our misery," "about the blessings of God toward us," "about our obligation to gratitude," "about the course of nature," "about the course of this world," and, finally, "about the church triumphant." Cases of conscience and experiential themes are interwoven throughout, and each chapter concludes with a prayer.

Udemans's experiential and edifying emphases are also transparent in the only commentary he wrote, "A Short and Clear Explanation about the Song of Solomon" (1616). For Udemans, the Song of Songs is a metaphorical presentation of the covenant of grace, which unveils the amazing spiritual marriage that God the Father, in Christ, made with the elect. In this Old Testament book, the Holy Spirit has, as Udemans writes in his preface, "intended to portray for us not only the true description of the Lord Christ and His church, but also the wonderful union of everlasting love and faithfulness which exists between these two parties."

Consequently, Udemans expounds the Song phrase by phrase and text by text, focusing on the Christ-church, Bridegroom-bride relationship. In this book, he leans on Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) and Joseph Hall (1574–1656), an English pietist who showed mystical streaks at times. Unlike some of the later Dutch Further Reformation divine writers, however, Udemans does not fall into any kind of experientialism that becomes overly, subjectively mystical. In his exposition of the Song of Solomon, he retains an objective ecclesiastical dimension while not denying the experiential fellowship between the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His adored bride, the church.

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2. The Dutch book titles are translated into English. They are placed within quotation marks in non-italic print to show that they have not been published in English.



Udemans's "The Ladder of Jacob" (1628) is an experiential and allegorical exposition of Jacob's vision at Bethel (Gen. 28:10) that focuses on the steps of grace in the Christian life. The ladder Jacob saw, which stretched from earth to heaven, depicts Christ Jesus as mediator and intercessor, for He said of Himself, "I am the way." Udemans then presents eight rungs on this spiritual ladder that enable a babe in grace to reach spiritual adulthood in Christ: authentic humility and repentance, knowing Christ, sincere faith, true confession of faith, a godly walk of life, Christian patience, spiritual joy in Christ, and perseverance of the saints. These rungs of grace comprise the straight way to heaven, and it is the task of every Christian, while proceeding from virtue to virtue, to not rest before arriving at the heavenly Zion.

Additionally, Udemans wrote a small book, "Preparation for the Lord's Supper in the form of a dialogue," in which Urbanus and Theophilus carry on a discourse regarding the Lord's Supper. It was added to the "Christian Catechism of the Netherlands' Reformed churches" by Gellius de Bouma, and also was added to "The Right Use of the Holy Supper of the Lord." Both of these titles were edifying works that were reprinted several times in the seventeenth century.

Another experiential work of edification is Udemans's "The Last Trumpet" (1653), a 750-page, four-volume exposition of Jesus' last discourse in Matthew 25, which includes the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the talents, and a description of some events on the final Day of Judgment. The major theme of this work is that the Christian's entire life must be a preparation for eternity. Since Christ, the Bridegroom of His church, will appear as a thief in the night, everyone who wishes to enter into the marriage feast of the Lamb must approach Him fully prepared. Whoever is not prepared will not be admitted into the wedding chamber, and after this life there is no more time of grace (Matt. 25:1-13). Moreover, Christ, like the master in the parable of the talents, will require from us an account of the gifts He has entrusted to us before we may enter His kingdom (vv. 14-30). This will occur at the final judgment, when the Son of man will separate the sheep from the goats, and the righteous will enter into everlasting life as the unrighteous will enter into everlasting pain.

In 1640, Udemans published "A Blessed New Year," a sermon that he had preached the previous year on January 1 based on 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Being a new creature means having a renewed mind—a mind that has spiritual understanding and discernment—and striving to live a sanctified life



St. Lievensmonster tower and church in Zierikzee (1657)

through a pure conscience, a sanctified will, and sanctified affections. It also means having a renewed tongue and being renewed in our visible conduct. And it means constantly strengthening all of these marks and graces by using the spiritual armor Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6:10–20, and through watchfulness and prayer, humility and meekness, and simplicity and caution.

Udemans had a large heart for common laborers, especially seafaring people. Since his church at Zierikzee consisted mostly of fishermen and personnel of merchant ships, Udemans wrote three books as practical Christian guides for the life and work of these seafaring men. In these books, he provided a practical and ethical manual for their trades, as well as a justification for the commercial and nautical life of the republic in regard to the East and West India companies (e.g., see “The Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant’s Ship”). He also spiritualized their trades, and developed the ideals of the Further Reformation in a particularly helpful way for all those involved with seafaring occupations.

First among these books was “The Spiritual Compass” (1617), which was greatly expanded in its fourth edition thirty years after its first publication. In the preface to this expanded edition, Udemans provides his reasons for writing this book. To avoid sandbars and hidden rocks, no seafarer, skipper, or fisherman will dare to sail the

oceans without a good compass. Nevertheless, many people sail on the sea of life without regard to the perils of their own souls, which arise from the devil, the world, and their own flesh. There are complaints that the catch at sea is decreasing daily; the boat owners invest heavily but see little in return. Everyone assigns his own reasons for this disappointment. But the true cause, which is that God is angry with man's sin, is overlooked. Then, too, few take to heart God's remedies for this chastisement: faith and repentance. Most people forget that the God who made the sea and the dry land is and remains the sole Lord and Master of both, and without His will neither sea nor land will supply anything fruitful. Udemans writes: "For this reason, if we wish to sail the sea profitably, to our spiritual and temporal prosperity, then the Lord Christ must be our Admiral, the Holy Spirit must be our Pilot, God's Word must be our compass, faith must be our ship, hope must be our anchor, and prayer must be our convoy. If we are so equipped, we need have no fear, even if the sea fumed and tossed so much that the mountains would collapse due to her tumult, and even if the world perished and the hills tumbled into the sea, since God is on board with us" (cf. Ps. 46).

After carefully treating this subject of seafaring with spiritual and practical applications, Udemans discusses the specific tasks of the godly seafarer. He explains how he must conduct himself while on a journey and how he must live after he returns home. He then explains the history of Paul's shipwrecks, and provides numerous prayers for various aspects of seafaring. The book concludes with Jonah's song of praise from the fish's belly (cf. Jonah 2).

Twenty years later, Udemans provided a second seafaring volume, "Merchant's Ship" (1637), which is an allegorical explanation of Moses' blessing on Zebulun and Issachar (Deut. 33:18–19). Like all of Udemans's treatises, this book is carefully subdivided. Much of "Merchant's Ship" stresses the need for contentment and joy in pursuing one's daily calling. After emphasizing in typical Puritan style that everyone should be satisfied in his calling, Udemans details the responsibilities of four callings: magistrates, ministers, merchants, and seafarers. He then writes extensively about the sea, describing it as an overflowing treasure house in which numerous temporal blessings lie hidden. Though land-based occupations are useful, earning a living from the sea, generally speaking, exceeds living on the land, for it brings blessings from the harvests of many lands rather than just one. Ships also bring in double income, for they are sent away loaded with goods and return loaded with goods. After extolling living from

the sea, Udemans adds a detailed recommendation for unrestricted maritime activity, offering twelve reasons why the idea of the free passage of ships should be promoted and honored.

Udemans intended his “Merchant’s Ship” as an introduction to the “Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant’s Vessel” (1638), printed a year later. This considerably larger work is, according to the title page, a “faithful testimony of how the merchant and the mariner must each conduct himself in his dealings” under all circumstances, in war and in peace, before God and man, on the water and on land, but especially among the heathen in the East and West Indies. In seven hundred pages, Udemans explains how people in these callings are always to aim at honoring God, edifying the church, saving souls, caring for family members, and supporting the fatherland. He then details the seafaring worker’s responsibilities toward God, family members, colleagues and employees, the state, authorities, and the heathen. In sum, “Spiritual Rudder” is a handbook on living the Christian life in the church, at home, and in society.

“Spiritual Rudder” is historically significant for its groundbreaking work on the ethics of economics among the Dutch Further Reformation divines. Udemans wrote positively of the Calvinist merchant’s goal of acquiring and increasing capital without contradicting his faith. He was less ascetic in his economic views than Willem Teellinck, the father of the Dutch Further Reformation. Udemans put less stress on being a stranger in the world and more stress on moving faith from the inner chamber out into the world’s marketplace. He emphasized that the believing merchant is not a believer on one hand and a merchant on the other, but he must always be a believer, both in public Sabbath worship and as a merchant, since he is always called, no matter the circumstances in which he finds himself, to think, speak, and act like a Christian. According to Udemans, Christianity always has profound and broad ramifications for the believer’s relationship with his neighbors and colleagues.

Some of the books that Udemans translated also reveal his Reformed, experiential, and edificatory emphases, of which two are worthy of mention here. First, Udemans translated Pierre de la Place’s (1520–1572) “An Appealing Tract Regarding the Excellence of the Christian” (1611), in which this erudite Huguenot delineates his orthodox Calvinistic concepts regarding election and predestination. Second, that same year he translated Jean Taffin’s (1529–1602) “A Clear Exposition of the Apocalypse.”



Willem Teellinck, father of the Dutch Further Reformation and contemporary of Udemans

In most of these books, Udemans strongly opposed nominal Christians who spoke freely about Christ's grace but whose lives showed no fruits of having been born again. Most of all, however, Udemans delighted to comfort God's people and promote their sanctification. He focused with precision on the practice of piety (*praxis pietatis*) in both its practical and experiential dimensions. Inner piety as evidenced through various cases of conscience, as well as inward spiritual joyfulness, receives a good portion of his attention. It is no coincidence that the only book of the Bible on which he wrote in full was the Song of Solomon. Like other Dutch Further Reformation divines, he grapples with questions related to assurance of faith, such as the internal evidences of the Holy Spirit, the practical syllogism, and the marks of saving grace. Yet, even as he deals with such matters, Udemans does not lose an objective-subjective balance. Justification and sanctification continue to function harmoniously in his theology, much like in John Calvin's.

The experiential, edificatory emphasis in Udemans's writings reflected his personal library, which was recorded at Zierikzee in 1653. His library provides evidence that he was well versed both in ancient





Zierikzee, where Udemans served as pastor for forty-five years

rather strong and fiery manner. In this debate, he chose to support the side of Gisbertus Voetius, Carolus de Maets (1597–1651), and Jacobus Borstius (1612–1680), all of whom, based on 1 Corinthians 11:14, had strongly opposed the then-current fashion of men wearing long hair.

Second, Udemans, like most other notable, conservative Reformed writers of his day, wrote against the Roman Catholic Church. He coauthored two books (one with Voetius) exposing Roman Catholic error, and also translated the substantial book of Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651) against Roman Catholic theology. Udemans also translated a little work of Andreas Hyperius (1511–1564), a professor of Marburg, titled “Tract of the Bacchus-feasts” (1610), in which Hyperius opposed the celebration of fast evenings, circuses, and various Roman Catholic amusements that the Reformation had not yet managed to eradicate.

Third, three of Udemans’s books were written against the Anabaptists. In Zierikzee in 1609, Udemans took an active role in a three-day Reformed/Baptist debate, primarily revolving around the nature of Christ’s incarnation. The debaters included the three Reformed ministers of Zierikzee and three prominent Anabaptist representatives. In 1613, Udemans published the minutes of the discussions of the debate, showing the validity of the Reformed viewpoint that Jesus grew in the womb of Mary as a real baby rather than merely passing through Mary as water passes through a trough, as the Anabaptists claimed.

Later, in 1620, Udemans wrote “Necessary Improvement,” a detailed rebuttal against Francois de Knuyt, one of the Anabaptist

representatives, in the 1609 debate, who had written “A Short Acknowledgment of Faith.” In his response, Udemans effectively refuted erroneous Anabaptist views concerning God’s attributes, the creation of man, the fall of man, the incarnation of Christ, baptism, the role of the magistrates, the taking of oaths, and prayer.

Udemans’s “The Peace of Jerusalem” (1627) was a response to the polemical book written by the Anabaptist Anthony Jacobsz (c. 1594–1624; often called Roscius after the friend and teacher of Cicero), titled, “Babel: The Confusion of the Paedo-baptists Among Themselves about the Subject of Baptism and its Adherence, to be a mirror for Hermanno Faulkelio.” Roscius’s book, in turn, was written against Herman Faulkelius’s “Babel, that is, the Confusions of the Anabaptists Among Themselves Regarding Virtually All the Components of Christian Doctrine.” In “The Peace of Jerusalem,” Udemans responded to Jacobsz’s book point by point. In sum, he attempted to show how much the Reformed church agreed on issues related to baptism with the convictions of the oldest apostolic church of Jerusalem. His polemical skills, though a bit tedious at times, were intellectually astute, sharp, and devastating.

Throughout these writings, Udemans not only answered traditional Anabaptist arguments related to the baptism of infants, but also responded at length to the Anabaptist charge that Reformed doctrine promotes careless living.

### *The Practice of Faith, Hope, and Love*

Udemans’s first major work, originally titled, “Practice: The Actual Exercises of the Primary Christian Virtues—Faith, Hope, and Love,” was published in 1612. In this book, Udemans, as a Reformed pietist, presents faith, hope, and love as experientially active Christian virtues. Justification, which establishes the believer’s union with Christ, is presented as the experiential commencement of sanctification, and therefore faith itself cannot but produce good works. This is really the burden of the book, as Udemans acknowledges in the preface.

The book commences with a portrayal of the essence and distinctions of the Christian’s three primary virtues:

- True faith is a fruit of the Spirit, planted in our hearts by the hearing of the Word and confirmed by the use of the sacraments.
- Hope is the fruit of the Spirit whereby we look forward with patience and endurance to the fulfillment of God’s promises.





Dutch Title Page

- Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit by which we love God for His sake and our neighbors (meaning everyone, including our enemies) for God's sake.

Udemans then explains all that affects the experience of these three virtues. When he discusses the practice of faith, he blends into it an exegesis of the Twelve Articles of Faith. When discussing the experience of hope, he incorporates an exposition of the Lord's Prayer. When discussing love, he thoroughly expounds the Ten Commandments. In this way, *The Practice of Faith, Hope, and Love* serves as a comprehensive doctrinal work of faith and ethics.

In expounding the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, Udemans follows an effective pattern of first providing a basic explanation and proofs of each phrase being expounded, then offering comforts for believers that flow from that phrase.

In keeping with the Reformed practice of catechizing, the Ten Commandments receive the most lengthy treatment, taking up two-thirds of the book. Udemans unveils a remarkable array of sins and virtues with regard to each commandment. In our day, when our consciences are so desensitized, we are naturally prone to think at certain points that Udemans yielded to legalism—especially when he deals with the Sabbath and various issues often relegated to the category of asceticism, such as fasting. If Udemans went too far in promoting rules that flow out of the Ten Commandments, however, our generation surely doesn't go far enough. And let us not forget that his treatment of the commandments shows how serious the Dutch Further Reformation divines were about living all of life to God's glory by following His will fully in all that we are called to do and not to do. They would not have viewed Udemans's treatment as legalistic, but as a sincere effort to bring all of life to the touchstone of Scripture and into submission to the will of our Father, which ought to be our meat and drink to do.

*The Practice of Faith, Hope, and Love* resonated well with the God-fearing people of the seventeenth-century Netherlands. It was reprinted at least four times in that century (Dordrecht: 1621, 1632, 1640; Amsterdam: 1658) and became one of Udemans's most important books. When the third edition was printed, Udemans added an article on meditation, titled, "Divine Contemplation: that is, Spiritual Means of Warfare by which to Attain Heaven with Such Violence as is Pleasing to God." This tract, based on Christ's words spoken to His disciples—"and from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12)—was well placed, as it was very similar to *The Practice of Faith, Hope, and Love* in its goal of stirring up lukewarm Christians to become active in promoting the kingdom of God.

## Conclusion

What William Perkins (1558–1602) did for England, Godefridus Udemans strove to do for the Netherlands—to point people to their divine calling in Christ. Udemans's work was deeply appreciated by many of his contemporaries. Eewoud Teellinck said that he was a faithful prophet to the Netherlands. Cornelius Boy said that Udemans's preaching was blessed to the conversion of thousands.

Udemans is one of the most significant, typical, and influential ministers in the early period of the Dutch Further Reformation, during the first half of the seventeenth century. This is to be largely attributed



The Synod of Dort (1618–1619)

to his many-faceted gifts and interests. He was a godly Christian with a heart that was sensitive to the needs of the poor, a great exegete and biblical scholar, a well-known and able Reformed preacher who stressed the practice of piety (*praxis pietatis*), a faithful and beloved shepherd of souls, a gifted historical theologian, an influential writer in the mainstream of the Dutch Further Reformation, and a capable guide in church affairs in Zeeland. He enjoyed great respect at classes and synods, and became particularly well known after his important role as vice president of the Synod of Dort. He was a great help for the Dutch Reformed Church in battling Arminianism before, during, and after the Remonstrant controversy.

Udemans had a great vision for the spiritual renewal of the Netherlands. He did not live to see that vision fulfilled as he wished, but he was given God's grace to strive after it, and in the process, he made a huge positive and spiritual impact on the lives of thousands.

Joel R. Beeke  
Grand Rapids, Michigan



Part 1  
The Chief  
Christian Virtues





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## CHAPTER

# 1

## A Description of the Chief Christian Virtues and How to Distinguish Them

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**T**he pagan philosophers of old listed the virtues required of a religious man under four headings: *justice*, *self-control*, *prudence*, and *boldness*. Although these qualities are necessary to lead a respectable life among men, they cannot cleanse our hearts from natural depravity. Indeed, they cannot bring us to the highest good, which is reconciliation with God, our Creator, whom we have angered by our sin. They cannot cleanse our hearts at all, for they touch only on matters of the second table of the law.

Clearly, these qualities are unable to reach the heart of the matter; at best, they do no better than scratch the surface<sup>1</sup> in outward actions. They are incapable of bringing us to the highest good, that is, reconciliation with God, for they do not go beyond telling us how to lead an honest and peaceful life among men.

When Holy Scripture gives us an example of a true Christian, it rises much higher than the pagans in organizing all Christian virtues under these three gifts (1 Cor. 13:13): *faith*, *hope*, and *love*. By the grace of God, we will deal briefly with these excellent gifts,

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concentrating more on the practice and power of godliness than on sharpening our minds with knowledge.

### **The Virtue of Faith**

We will start by describing these virtues so that readers may correctly understand their nature and occasion. We know that the word *faith* has several meanings. Sometimes *the faith* refers to the whole teaching of the gospel (Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1). But *faith* may also mean a basic head knowledge of and assent to the truth of Holy Scripture that produces no joy. This is *historical faith*, which even devils have and which causes them to tremble (James 2:19). At other times, *faith* means some knowledge of and assent to God's Word mixed with the brief joy that results from having tasted God's grace. But in times of temptation, this belief, which is called *temporary faith* (Luke 8:13), disappears. Or *faith* can mean the ability to do miracles in the name of Christ supported by the special revelation of Christ's promises. This is called *miraculous faith* (1 Cor. 13:2; Matt. 17:20). Last, it may mean *justifying faith* (Rom. 5:1). If we have justifying faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We will now deal with this kind of faith and describe it.

True faith is a fruit of the Spirit, planted in our hearts by the hearing of the Word and confirmed by the use of the sacraments. By this faith, we not only understand and firmly assent to the truth of God's written Word, but we also firmly believe in the promises of the holy gospel in Jesus Christ, and appropriate the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to ourselves.

In this description of justifying faith, we will look at three parts in particular: its author or giver,<sup>2</sup> its nature or characteristics, and its foundation.

1. *The Author of faith.* The Author of faith is the Holy Spirit, who opens our hearts to understand godly things (Acts 16:14). The Spirit assures us of truth (1 John 5:6) and produces in us true trust in God (Gal. 4:6). He is therefore called the Spirit of faith (2 Cor.

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4:13). Faith is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). To plant justifying faith in our hearts, the Spirit uses the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:17) and the holy sacraments (1 Cor. 12:13).

2. *The nature of faith.* The nature of faith consists of three parts: (a) knowledge, (b) assent, and (c) steadfast trust.

(a) *Knowledge* necessarily comes first, for how can anyone intelligently assent to something he does not understand? How can he trust someone he does not know? Romans 10:14 asks, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Paul confesses in 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed.”

Faith is therefore knowledge. “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant [that is, Christ] justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities,” says Isaiah 53:11. Without knowledge we cannot gain Christ (Phil. 3:8) or obtain eternal life (John 17:3)—elect infants excepted. Our knowledge in this life is never perfect (1 Cor. 13:9), and the measure of faith is not equal in all believers (Rom. 12:3). Nevertheless, every believer must have as much knowledge of God and of those things He has given us through His Son for his soul to have peace and to rest upon a sure foundation (1 Cor. 3:12; 1 John 2:14).

(b) *Assent* is also necessary in faith, for someone who hears these truths and does not agree with them does not believe. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” John 3:33 says, “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true,” but 1 John 5:10 warns that “he that believeth not God has made him a liar.” True faith is sometimes tested by doubt, but faith fights against doubt and in the end will be victorious over it. We have good examples of this in Gideon (Judg. 6:13) and the prophet Asaph (Ps. 77:10).

(c) *Steadfast trust* consists of firmly taking hold of God’s promises and appropriating them to our souls. This is clearly necessary in faith, for it is the power and the most important characteristic of justifying faith. This characteristic distinguishes true faith from other kinds of faith. We know that knowledge and assent are also common in historical and temporary faith, but steadfast trust belongs only to genuine, saving faith. Without trust, we cannot

have access to God's grace. "In [Jesus Christ] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him," says Ephesians 3:12. Without steadfast trust, we cannot partake of Christ (Heb. 3:14), for we are made partakers of Christ only if our confidence is in Him from the beginning to the end. Without confidence, we also cannot receive salvation (Rom. 4:21). Abraham was fully persuaded that He who made promises was able to fulfill those promises. Notice that Abraham's confidence was imputed to him for righteousness.

Without this confidence, our prayers will not be heard. James 1:6 says, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." First John 5:14 adds, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Without confident trust, we have no comfort in our need. But with it we may boldly declare, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:6). In sum, without steadfast trust, we cannot be saved (Ps. 2:12; Jer. 17:7).

We should pause here to remember what we said before about knowledge and assent—that trust, though genuine, is not perfect in the believer. It is still being tested by many infirmities. Although these trials vary from day to day, we must earnestly pray each day: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5; Mark 9:24). This trust is therefore referred to as the beginning of our confidence (Heb. 3:14). Nonetheless, however small this measure of confidence, if it is unfeigned and stands on solid ground, it can uphold our souls and strengthen them against all temptation and doubt. A good example of this is the apostle Peter (Matt. 14:30). Those who trust in God will not be ashamed (Ps. 25:3).

3. *The foundation of faith.* God's Word, as written in the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, is the only foundation of faith. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 15:4 says: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." This is the foundation of the prophets and the

apostles on which we must build (Eph. 2:10). It is the sure Word we must heed (2 Peter 1:19). Without God's Word, we would not see the very dawn of true knowledge.

Scripture gives us enough wisdom to be saved (John 20:31; 1 Tim. 3:16). By contrast, ignorance of Scripture is the mother of unbelief (John 20:9; Matt. 22:29). Therefore, opening Scripture and correctly understanding it are the right means of planting faith in our hearts (Luke 24:32–45).

The first two parts of faith, knowledge and assent, apply to all of Scripture, including the books of the prophets and apostles (Acts 24:14; 2 Peter 3:2). However, our trust rests most on the promises of the New Testament (Rom. 4:20) rather than on the law. We cannot trust the law for our salvation because the law works only wrath (Rom. 4:15). It points to our sins and the curse we bear because of them (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10). We take refuge in the promises of the gospel (Gal. 3:18), of which Christ is the sure foundation, for all promises are amen in Him (2 Cor. 1:20; Acts 13:32).

All who believe in Christ shall receive the remission of sins (Acts 10:43) and eternal life (John 3:16). We must seize these promises with steadfast trust and appropriate them to ourselves, saying, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). These excellent words describe the appropriation of the gospel of peace to our hearts, as well as the difference between steadfast trust in Christ by faith and vain presumption.

Every Christian must examine himself to see whether Christ is in him (2 Cor. 13:5), for otherwise he may deceive himself (James 1:22). As 1 John 1:6 says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Having described true and false faith, let us now turn to hope.

### **The Virtue of Hope**

The word *hope* also has several meanings. Sometimes the word refers to faith, as in 1 Peter 3:15. Other times it refers to the foundation of faith, as in 1 Timothy 1:1. It may also refer to the things

hoped for, such as eternal life (Col. 1:5). And sometimes it refers to the instrument with which we expect the promises, as in 1 John 3:3. Let us concentrate on this fourth meaning to offer the following description: Hope is the fruit of the Spirit whereby we look forward with patience and endurance to the fulfillment of God's promises. Let us look at the Author of hope, the nature of hope, and the foundation of hope.

1. *The Author of hope.* The Author of hope is the Holy Spirit. Hope is a fruit of the Spirit, for the Holy Spirit not only seals God's promises in our hearts (Eph. 1:13), but also sheds God's love within our hearts so that we may rejoice in oppression and hope in God's greatness (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit also gives us hope in the midst of our infirmities (Rom. 8:26).

2. *The nature of hope.* The nature of hope is patient and steadfast expectation. Romans 8:25 tells us, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." James declares: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (5:7–8). After Abraham patiently endured years of waiting for a promised son, he finally obtained the promise (Heb. 6:15). By contrast, the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness constantly put God to the test by doubting His promises (Ps. 78:41). The result was that they did not enter the Promised Land.

3. *The foundation of hope.* The foundation of hope is God's promises alone. Titus 1:2 says, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Abraham believed in God's promises "against hope," says Romans 4:18, for he did not doubt God's promises.

### **The Virtue of Love**

There are two kinds of love: natural love (see Rom. 1:31 and 2 Tim. 3:3) and spiritual love (see Col. 1:18). Natural love flows from natural causes, such as blood relationships, from appreciating some gift or virtue in a neighbor, or from receiving some kindness.

Unbelievers may exhibit natural love, but we are not speaking of this kind of love here. Spiritual love flows from faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5). This virtue is twofold, for we must love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37).

Spiritual love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We show this type of love by loving God for His sake and our neighbors for God's sake.

Again, we will examine this type of love in three ways: the Author, the objects, and the source of this love.

1. *The Author of love.* The author of spiritual love is God the Holy Spirit. He is the giver of all good gifts (Gal. 5:22).

2. *The objects of love.* Above all, we must love God. Second to that, we must love our neighbor. By God we mean the one and only eternal spiritual Being, who revealed Himself in creating the world, and in His revealed Word as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:20; 1 John 5:7). Our neighbors include everyone—even our enemies (Luke 10:37; Matt. 5:44).

3. *The source of love.* The source of this love is completely spiritual; indeed, the true source is God Himself (1 John 4:8). God is love, and love flows from Him. Therefore, we must love God, not because of some external benefit outside of God (Job 1:10), but for God's own sake, for He is our highest good (Ps. 16:5). He is our shield and our exceedingly great reward (Gen. 15:1). He is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9; Jer. 2:13). When we have God, we have everything (Ps. 73:25).

We must also love our neighbors for God's sake, for our neighbors are created in the image of God (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9), and because God has commanded us to love our neighbors (1 John 2:23). Even if our neighbors are our enemies, we may not hate them (Lev. 19:17) but only their sin (Ps. 101:4). David asked: "Do I not hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" (Ps. 139:21). David did not hate his enemies but only their sin in rising up against God.

Spiritual love has various degrees. The closer a person resembles God, the more we must love that person. Thus, we should especially do good to those in the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

In addition, the closer we are to people in authority over us, the more we should diligently show them love. This includes parents, government authorities, relatives, and others in authority over us. We are told in 1 Timothy 5:8, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” We should not show partiality to anyone, whether he has a high or low position, is rich or poor, or is friend or foe (James 2:1; Jude 1:16); we should love them all.

### **Conclusion: The Virtues Compared**

The three virtues of faith, hope, and love are connected like the links of a chain. Nevertheless, there are differences between them. The difference between faith and love is easy to understand, for faith receives, while love gives. Faith is the mother, while love is the daughter. Faith makes us children of God, but love shows that we are children of God. Faith looks only to God, while love also involves our neighbors. Faith lasts throughout this life, while love continues through eternity. Thus, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:13 that love is the greatest virtue of all.

The difference between faith and hope is less clear. They have many similarities, and faith is described by hope in Hebrews 1:1. Nevertheless, we can easily deduce the difference between faith and hope from this description: faith firmly agrees with and appropriates God’s promises, while hope patiently expects those promises to be fulfilled. Faith considers the past as well as the future (1 Cor. 13:8–13; Heb. 1:1), while hope looks only to the future. Faith is rooted in all of God’s words, while hope is grounded only on the promises. Faith is content with the promises, but hope longs for them.

The illustrious Martin Luther eloquently expressed this truth in saying, “*Fides intuetur verbum rei, sed spes intuetur rem verbi,*” meaning that faith considers the word of the promise, but hope closes with the contents of the promise. Hope looks forward with confidence to all that is promised.