

VERSAMELDE WERKE
Dr. ANDREW MURRAY

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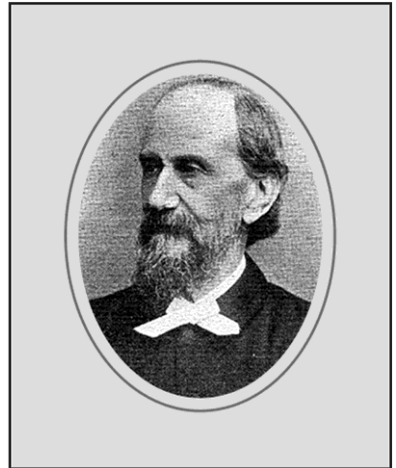
DIE HEIDELBERGSE KATEGISMUS



DIE CHRISTEN-STUDENTEVERENIGING VAN S.A.
STELLENBOSCH
1945

Editor's Introduction to Andrew Murray on the Heidelberg Catechism

Andrew Murray (1828-1917) is a Christian leader who has intrigued me for many years. I have concluded that there are many more complexities to him than both his critics and his supporters have acknowledged. One area of Murray's life which has not received proper attention is the sermonic written material which he produced while preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism. From what I have been able to determine, these have remained in Afrikaans only. Furthermore, even the Afrikaans text has not been well circulated and has not undergone extensive reprinting, unlike his many other works.¹ It is a significant work for many reasons. Murray came to the defense of the theology contained in the Heidelberg Catechism Question 60 on the extent of sin. This certainly identified Murray as no modernist, as is demonstrated by his *A Lecture on the Modern Theology*,² another almost forgotten Murray work. It is fascinating to read of Andrew Murray being described as belonging to the "ultraorthodox party" of the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1860s. The layers of Andrew Murray have not always been duly appreciated nor investigated. The Murray of 1900 must also be read by this story told above.



Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

It was J. I. Packer who wrote in his *A Passion for Holiness*³ that he first wanted to entitle his book, *With Christ in the School of Holiness*, "a deliberate echo, almost a steal, of *With Christ in the School of Prayer* by Andrew Murray, a much appreciated South African devotional author of two generations ago."⁴ Packer then proceeded to write of three essential points of convergence with Murray on holiness. In the end, the title did not come out as contemplated. Why do I take the time to relate this story? Because Packer, who is known to identify areas of weakness in

¹ Murray's sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism are found in the 1945 *Versamelde Werke Dr. Andrew Murray*. See illustration on the facing page.

² Andrew Murray, *A Lecture on the Modern Theology* (Cape Town: Pike and Byles, 1868).

³ British edition title, or with the North American title, *Rediscovered Holiness*.

⁴ J. I. Packer, *A Passion for Holiness* (Leicester: Crossway Books, 1992), 15.

the “Keswick theology” of the past – yet here is the balance – also freely admits that Murray (and others viewed as part of Keswick) clearly have something to offer the Church universal today. It is time for another “read through” of Andrew Murray.⁵

What follows here are the beginnings of a translation project of Murray’s sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism. It was only natural that Murray did such as he stood in the tradition and customs of the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church of the nineteenth century. These two selections have been translated by Gerda van der Merwe, the former registrar at Mukhanyo Theological College, South Africa. We owe a great debt to Gerda for helping to bring the English world this material. An editorial committee has been formed for consultation and to continue this project with the hope of seeing all of Murray’s material on the Heidelberg Catechism published as a single volume in English. It should be added that this is not undertaken only as an academic exercise to bring Afrikaans Andrew Murray to light. We want to come with humility to learn from this man of God and uncover more shades of complexity in him than we imagined. As editor, I welcome correspondence from the international community about this project.

J. C. W.



Andrew Murray’s grave, Wellington, South Africa

⁵ See also Kenneth Ferguson, “Waiting Upon God”, *The Monthly Record* (August, 2009): 10.

Heidelberg Catechism First Sunday: The Only Comfort

Andrew Murray

*“...for I know whom I have believed,
And am persuaded that he is able to
Keep that which I have committed unto
Him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)*

The Catechism, or teaching on the Christian doctrines as taught in the Dutch Reformed Churches and schools, is the booklet from which we preach in our churches. The aim thereof is to equip members of the church to give an account of their faith. The way by which this goal is attempted to be reached is to give them the language of faith so that anyone who wants to confess his faith with a sincere heart may know how he should speak.

In the first question, “*What is thy only comfort in life and in death,*” the Catechism indicates that it does not want to handle or discuss God’s Word as an abstract system, as is all too frequently done, but as the joyful gospel in which each has a personal interest. It comes to the person who is a lost sinner who is in need of redemption and of the comfort it can afford in life as well as in death. It is necessary that where the confession of faith is to be given, the faith should first be sincere and alive. For this reason, the Catechism answers throughout its teaching in the first person, because the knowledge of the way to salvation is of no use if it is not a personal issue. In answer to the first question, the Catechism then gives a short summary of the faith and the unutterable joy that can be had by the one who believes. The second question deals with the way by which someone can obtain this comfort and will be dealt with later on in this teaching. Thus in Lord’s Day One we will talk about *The Only Comfort in Life and in Death*, and we will hear (I) wherein the comfort is; and (II) the way in which it can be obtained.

I

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

- A. That I am not my own,
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven:
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹

The answer to the first question is one of the loveliest confessions of faith that can ever be found. In the words thereof we hear the joyful tone of faith of the men of the Reformation with whom there was neither fear nor doubt about their state before God. In their struggle against Rome, they learnt to understand what faith was: the casting and leaving of self onto God's Word and God's power and therefore the firm foundation of an unshakeable faith. They wanted to educate all their learners in such a joyous, clear faith. For that reason they did not hesitate to place these glorious words on the lips of the children for whom they used this textbook. Everyone had to know that it was the confession of faith to which the Christian is called and to which he has a right. Likewise, everyone had to know the means by which God had to be honoured and pleased and the means by which the Christian should receive courage and strength, even to offering up everything to his Lord in the martyr's fire.

We want to go through each part of the confession simply and section by section with the aim of understanding the content correctly and also of coming under the full impression of this glorious faith.

That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul

“*That I*”, this is how the church wants me to start my confession. “*That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

“*...am not my own, but belong unto Jesus*” – this is the language of simple assurance of faith which the Catechism not only requires from older, advanced Christians but also of young believers. It is not the big, strong children who have the greatest need of the assurance of the love of their father, but especially the youngest and the weakest. Similarly, for the youngest Christian, the assurance of faith is a necessity of life. He will learn to speak these words as soon as he is willing to disregard himself and put his trust in the faithfulness of his Lord alone.

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What strikes us here first is that the comfort is not sought in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, nor in the hope of heaven, but in something that goes much deeper in the life of faith, yes, something that sums up salvation in its actual roots – the personal relationship to the Lord Jesus. In the preaching of the gospel this is not brought to the fore often enough. The doctrine of being made righteous through free grace is often preached orthodoxly and with great seriousness while worriedly seeking to understand and hold onto it; and yet the Christian does not find rest in the joy that is promised. The main cause is that often the preaching and the message of salvation lack what makes up the Godly glory; that is, the Son of God came *personally*, not only to die, but to seek the sinner as His property, to take him up in His friendship and love, and to give him the living certainty that he *belongs* to Jesus Christ *personally*. Where faith sees this and holds on to it, it holds a comfort which neither death, nor life, nor any created being can take away. When the soul sees Jesus as God in His almighty power; as man in His tender, compassionate love; as the Crucified, Who with His blood purchased a people for Himself; as the Exalted that has all power on the throne, then the phrase “*that I belong to Jesus Christ*” is enough for him – a complete salvation. And he learns to understand and say it more and more.

“*That I, with body and soul...*” – the body and the temporal, no less than the soul with the spiritual, the whole, wonderful composition that makes up the life of that “*I*” – *in life and death*: the smallest trouble of life no less than the enormous transition to eternity summarized in death, “*do not belong to myself*” – no, I am not in the least my own property, nor do I have to care for myself, nor please myself – *I do not belong to myself, but to my trusted Saviour, Jesus Christ*. Whereas faith first knows Jesus as Saviour, it only needs to take note of His faithfulness in order to enjoy the comfort that man needs. He who started a good work will complete it; nothing shall separate me from the love of Him who with His blood bought me and took me as His property.

This glorious language of assurance of faith is so totally in correspondence with the doctrine of Holy Scripture. It would have been good for the church and the life of Godly bliss of its members if men had preached assurance of faith as it is written in the first question of the Catechism: as the *duty* and the *right* of each Christian, even of the young Christian. There were times when someone would be viewed as arrogant if he wanted to make the language of this answer his own; there were times when they almost did not know anymore that a healthy faith always brings forth its own assurance, because it teaches the sinner to keep himself occupied with his faithful Saviour to Whom he belongs. Let everyone who still doubts what the Reformed doctrine on this truth is or who still wants to be delivered of doubts about his own state meditate on our reply, memorize it and prayerfully take it to heart. God’s Spirit wants to teach Christians to speak this language freely and joyfully.

He bought me with His blood

Aiming at us knowing what the firm foundation is on which this salvation rests, as well as knowing the rich treasure of blessings and comfort that is locked up therein, the Catechism teaches us in six words or so to give close account of our assurance of faith: I belong to Jesus Christ, Who paid for all my sins completely through His precious blood. Thus speaks the believer on the grounds of the Holy Scriptures.

Paul says: “. . . *ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price . . .*” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and 7:23). “. . . *For thou . . . hast redeemed us to God by thy blood . . .*” (Revelation 5:9) is the song of the redeemed in heaven. It is through faith in His blood that the believer obtains the firm assurance that he belongs to Jesus.

According to the Word of God, the blood of Christ was shed for our sins. We were captives under the power of sin, bound with the chains of the law and without hope to be freed from that prison unless we could pay the last penny. Through the shedding of His blood, Christ bore all my debts and paid for my sins completely. “*(Jesus Christ). . . Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. . .*” (Romans 3:25). The blood is presented as the object of faith; those who believe in it receive redemption. That blood not only gives me the right to redemption but also gives the Redeemer the right to me; the payment of the debt through the blood gives Him the right, the complete right of ownership of everyone that believes in that blood. Through faith the Christian now belongs to “. . . *the church . . . which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). It is through faith in that blood, in the Godly power thereof, in the promise of God that calls me to come and wash in it, in the faithfulness of Him who will never forget the property He bought, that the believer says, “*It is my only comfort that I belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who paid all my sins completely through His precious blood.*”

He delivered me from the devil

And freed me from the tyranny of the devil. The sinner is not only under the power of the law of God in order that he might be delivered through the payment of the debt, he is also under the power of Satan. Satan is not only a tempter; that is what he was to the Lord Jesus and what he is for the people of God. However, he is also a mighty prince that forces the sinner to serve him. It is through the law of God that Satan has power over us. God said that when we sin, we come under Satan’s power. The Lord Jesus not only delivers us from the power of the law but also from the power of the devil, Satan. Christ came into contact with the devil as a tempter in the desert and as the power of darkness through His suffering, and He legitimately and completely conquered Satan. Each redeemed person is like a sheep that has been saved by the Good Shepherd from the mouth of the lion; the Good Shepherd treasures him as His precious property and protects him. The

believer knows that Satan does not have the least power over him and, like a sheep that rests on the shoulder of the Shepherd, he sings, *I belong to my faithful Redeemer Jesus Christ, who saved me from the tyranny of the devil.*

He protects me

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. We expect from every reasonable person that when he buys something at a high price, he will faithfully care for it. We know for certain that a shepherd who risks his life to save one of his sheep from a lion will lead it safely to its destination. The one who knows what he professes says, *I belong to Jesus Christ*, and he also knows that his Redeemer is his Protector. The more the believer meditates on who his faithful Saviour is, the more he becomes convinced that Jesus Christ is willing to care for his body and soul every moment. The Christian must simply allow the Holy Spirit to explain the meaning of the saying, *I belong to Jesus Christ*, and his soul will pronounce this as his only and all-sufficient comfort: *He protects me* – so faithfully and powerfully as if I am a member of His body, yes, the apple of His eye. *He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head*, how much more that no evil will have power over my soul; yes, also that all, even the least wrong, even the largest and heaviest, even the smallest and most insignificant, *must contribute to my salvation.* O Glorious comfort, to be able to say this, *That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.*

He seals me through His Spirit

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life. Many have considered this comfort “I belong to Jesus” and thought, “Yes, it is all glorious if I could only know how I could obtain that assurance.” Listen here! The believing confessor does not have this assurance in himself, in his sincerity or in the firmness of his faith. Absolutely not! Wherein then? It is in the assurance that the Lord Jesus Himself gives through the Holy Spirit. The owner of a book writes his name in it. An ox knows his owner and a donkey the trough of his owner. A child knows who his father is and a soldier knows whom he is serving. Would God allow that His people not know that they belong to Him? This thought is absurd, in conflict with the whole of Scripture. The Father has made a definite and all glorious provision that each one of His redeemed will be sealed as the Lord’s property. The Father has given the Holy Spirit to the Son to give to us; so that we will know what God gave us through grace; so that He with our spirit can confess that we are children of God; so that He is the guarantee, the sure proof and taste of eternal life. Thus I know with a Godly and steadfast certainty that I, in my life and death, belong to my faithful Redeemer Jesus Christ.

He sanctifies me for His service

And makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. One expects service from your property, and Jesus is serious about His right of ownership of me. He wants me *to live for him*, as His sole property, with no will other than to please Him. He knows that I am not able to do it. His acceptance of me is not made subject to a promise I made to serve Him faithfully. No, His acceptance is subject to His promise that He will equip me to do so. In that promise I had the courage to say that I was His property; I understood that He himself, through His Spirit, would create in me the will as well as the work. For that reason I say, *I belong to Jesus; therefore He makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.*

To live for Him

This becomes the motto of the life of faith and of sanctification. Just as Jesus is and was in the redemption of everything, so He becomes it in the life of the redeemed. In the words *I belong to Jesus*, complete redemption is introduced as a personal relationship of love in which Jesus has been incorporated; *I belong to Him* just as a member of my body belongs to me, as a child belongs to his father. I do not belong to myself but to my father. The believer goes over completely from his own side into this personal relationship: *I live for Him; He makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.*

When you are able to say all this, you have the only comfort in life and in death. You have the knowledge of the salvation and joy He wants to bring to you. Do you ask how to obtain it? Listen now.

II

The way in which this comfort can be obtained

2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:

- first, how great my sin and misery are;
- second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;
- third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.²

The Catechism clearly explains the goal it proposes. It wants to bring each one of you to speak this glorious language of faith: It is my only comfort *that I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ* and enjoy all that is included therein. For those who can already say this, the Catechism wants to teach them to understand it more completely and to confess it so that others are

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encouraged to desire such salvation. The major cause for so many to miss that comfort and salvation is ignorance. The power of Satan is the power of darkness; blindness and ignorance are major causes why many go lost. The Catechism wants to direct your attention to three main factors wherein ignorance reveals itself, so that the light of God's Word will make you see what is necessary for you.

The first thing is the knowledge of sin and misery. Everyone says that they have sinned and that misery comes from sin, but how few people really know what sin and misery are! Unless you know and grieve and become concerned about it, true comfort cannot enter your life. Come, all who long for this comfort, and sit as pupils to learn this first and all-important lesson: how great your sin and misery are. If you correctly see to what extent you have transgressed God's holy law, how corrupt your nature is, and how powerless you are to undo the transgressions of the past or to overcome them in future; if you see how just and how frightening and how certain the eternal judgment of God is of you and your sin, then will the comfort of the knowledge, *I belong to Jesus*, become desirable and indispensable to you. The knowledge of sin takes away the false rest and self-righteousness from the sinner, teaches him to bow before God in brokenness and self-loathing, and in this way prepares the heart to accept Godly redemption.

The second point about which ignorance exists is redemption. Even if all of us own a Bible and even if we are all educated therein, it is astonishing how astoundingly wrong or gloomy are the concepts most people have about salvation. In this way they are being kept away from it. There is no correct knowledge of the wonderful Person, the work that He has done, or the perfect salvation that He has prepared and presented as a gift. Furthermore, there is no understanding of the simplicity of faith and the enormous change it brings about when we become part of Christ and His righteousness. Come, listen to what God wants to reveal to you, and it will be shown to you that the whole, eternal salvation is within your reach. The way is also prepared for you to rejoice: *I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ*.

Then the way is prepared for the third part. Oh, how many who sincerely search for the Lord (and also think that they believe) enjoy and confess so little of the comfort that is wrought through faith because they do not know what it means that the saved should belong to the Lord totally and only. They do not know that there is grace which enables them to prove through their whole lives their gratitude to God, that the Lord truly makes them *willing and able to live for Him*. The knowledge of these three things – Misery, Redemption and Gratitude – will each contribute to teach us that confession must be done with increasing cheerfulness. Thus in a more abundant and unequalled way we will experience the comfort and heavenly power which is brought about through boasting: *That I am not my own but belong – with body and soul, in life and death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ*.

There you now have the main purpose that is aimed at with these sermons

on the Catechism. It is not only to prove the biblical foundation of the Reformed doctrine to you. It is not only to increase the knowledge for you to rejoice in the full orthodoxy of your faith. No, however necessary these few things are, the Catechism has another, much higher and much more glorious goal. The first question is the entrance to all that it wants to teach us: *That I belong to Jesus Christ*; He who owns the key to this treasure chest can time after time come back to unlock and appropriate that which another cannot find. In the answer you truly find the sum and total of the gospel. Eye and attention is averted from everything; Christ, and what He does, is the comfort in life and in death. To belong to Him as being bought by Him, as His redeemed, as being protected by Him, as sealed by Him, as sanctified by Him, as His property in complete reality – this is the salvation to which the Catechism, to which the Church and to which *I* want to take you.

Who would be willing to accept His invitation? I pray you all, come, listen! Let it now be your intention to also become part of this salvation. Start now to allow the Spirit of God to admonish you for your sins and acknowledge that you have done wrong to this Christ and dishonoured Him by withholding His rightful property, yourself, from Him. Return to this Saviour who calls for you and seeks you as the lost sheep you are. Offer yourself now to Him to be His property and to live for Him. Do not see it as risking too much to start using the glorious language of faith from the Catechism and to make it your own. Learn the words by heart. Prayerfully and believingly say it; by saying it, faith will grow. And so you also will become one of the tens of thousands who, with growing understanding and growing joy, knows no other answer to the question about their hope and comfort in life and in death than this glorious answer: *That I am not my own but belong – with body and soul, in life and death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.*

May the Lord God make us partakers of all of this, and may it be the language of us all.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins through His blood and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be all the glory and the power for all eternity! Amen. (Revelation 1:5b, 6)