

The Only Adorable God

By Rev. Herman Hoeksema

FOREWORD

"The Only Adorable God" was part of a series of sermons preached by Rev. Herman Hoeksema on Romans 9-11. Young ladies in his church at that time took shorthand notes of those sermons, typed them out in full, and gave them to Rev. Hoeksema for editing. Each of the sermons in that series was then published in pamphlet form by First Church's English Men's Society.

This publication is a reprint of one of the pamphlets in that long-out-of-print series. May the reading of it still today kindle within us, as Rev. Hoeksema put it to his readers long ago, a "profound sense of wonder and adoration" that causes us to cry out, with the apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" And then to take on our lips the doxology, "... to Him be glory forever, Amen!"

The Evangelism Committee of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

The Only Adorable God

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. Romans 11:33-36.

With these verses we come to the close of our discussion of the truth concerning God's predestinating purposes with respect to Jew and Gentile, as it is revealed in chapters nine to eleven of the epistle to the Romans. How fitting and worthy a close it is! Throughout these chapters the basic truth, as we had occasion to point out repeatedly, is that God is sovereign in the matter of salvation, and always the keynote was heard: Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord! And the conclusion is a doxology, a hymn of praise and adoration dedicated to the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, of whom, through

whom, and unto whom are all things, and whose alone is the glory for ever! It is a doxology which is indeed caused by what we might behold of the wonderful riches of the Most High because it pleased Him to reveal them unto us, but which at the same time is a confession that we have seen only a little of those riches, and that the glimpse we had of them suggested to us an infinite depth, which, while we cannot fathom it, we can only adore in worshipping wonder.

As to the connection of this doxology with the preceding part of the epistle, I am inclined to take a broad view. It is true that the connection might be found in the immediate context, where the apostle had spoken of the salvation of the fullness of the Gentiles and of the Jews, more particularly in verse thirty-two, where the marvelous wisdom of God was suggested in that He concluded them all in unbelief, in order that He might have mercy upon all. Or we might consider this doxology as being the conclusion of the whole eleventh chapter, which is an elaboration on the theme expressed in the question and answer of the first verse: "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid!" But we may very well broaden the scope of our conception of the context. There is nothing in this hymn of praise that would forbid us to consider the doxology as concluding this entire section of the epistle to the Romans, chapters nine to eleven. It may even be conceived as looking back over the whole plan of salvation as revealed in this epistle thus far.

We must understand that with the end of the eleventh chapter the apostle has come to the close of what might be called the doctrinal part of the epistle. In the next chapter he begins the applicatory section. The doxology contained in these closing verses may very well be intended as the grand finale of all that precedes. The apostle, in this letter to the Romans, developed the theme of the gospel of God concerning His Son, the righteousness of God which is by faith. From the dark depths of misery and corruption pictured in the first chapter, he gradually ascended into the glorious light of everlasting mercy. Gradually the Spirit introduced him into the mysteries of salvation, and, as he advanced, his soul began to sing in adoration of the riches of God revealed in Christ — until, after the contemplation of God's adorable predestinating purposes with regard to Jew and Gentile, his soul is wholly captivated by the revelation of God's glorious virtues, and he exclaims in the words of our text: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"

It is, of course, impossible in one sermon to explain all the doctrinal contents of the words of our text. Neither is this the purpose of a passage of this nature. Rather must we remember that it is a hymn of praise, and that the contemplation of it should bring us to our knees in grateful adoration and worship. But we must say a few words about it, nevertheless. We will speak therefore on the theme:

The Only Adorable God

I. The Inexhaustible Fountain

II. The Infallible Artificer

III. The Sole End of All Things

The Inexhaustible Fountain

The threefold division of my theme is derived from the text itself. If you look closely at the words of our text, you will notice that in their arrangement the number three prevails. There are three series of three conceptions that are interrelated, the individual terms of which correspond to one another. There is, first of all, the series: *riches, wisdom, knowledge* of God. Thus, at least, I like to translate the thirty-third verse. There is no reason at all in the original for the translation found in our English Bible: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," according to which the text speaks of the riches of God's wisdom and of the riches of His knowledge. Literally rendered, the original runs simply as follows: "O the depth of riches and of wisdom and knowledge of God." Thus the text speaks of the depth of God's riches, the depth of His wisdom, and the depth of His knowledge.

We have here, therefore, a series of three concepts. And corresponding to these are the three statements made in question form in verses thirty-four and thirty-five: no one ever *gave* anything to God, so that he might expect a just recompense; no one ever *counseled* Him; and no one has ever *known the mind* of the Lord. For, who would ever presume to give anything to Him, the depth of whose riches is unfathomable? Who would be so presumptuous as to propose to be counselor to Him whose wisdom is unsearchable? And who could possibly comprehend the mind of the Lord, whose knowledge is infinite and whose ways are past finding out?

And again, corresponding to the former two series of three is the one that is found in the last verse of our text: of him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him are all things. Because there is an inexhaustible depth of riches in God, so that no one could possibly give Him anything, all things are *out* of Him. Because He is infinite in knowledge and understanding, so that no one can ever comprehend the mind of the Lord, all things are *through* Him. And because He is infinite in wisdom, so that all things are perfectly adapted to the end He has in view, and no one was His counselor, all things are *unto* Him. The underlying idea of the entire doxology is, evidently, that He is *God*, that He is *God alone*, that there is no God beside Him, and that all glory must therefore be ascribed to Him only forever!

The text speaks of God as the inexhaustible Fountain. For it speaks of the depth of His riches, it emphasizes that no one ever gave Him anything, and it declares that all things are out of Him. Let us briefly consider each of these statements.

There is an amazing depth of riches in God: "O the depth of the riches!" If we would understand these words at all, we must certainly change our human notions about riches. When we speak of the riches there are in God, our earthly and carnal conceptions of riches are not at all applicable. For we have become accustomed to look upon material things as riches, but the riches in God are, of course, purely spiritual. According to our human notion, riches are things we possess. But the riches in God consist in what He is. God's riches are, indeed, reflected in the things that are made, in all the works of His hands. These are the revelation of His riches, but they are not the divine riches themselves. God is rich in Himself. He is absolutely rich. His riches are His adorable virtues, the glorious and infinite perfections of His being, His praises and wonders, His unfathomable goodness. He is a light and there is no darkness in Him at all. His omnipotence and omniscience and infinite wisdom, His glorious holiness and absolute righteousness and truth, His unchangeable love and abundant mercy and beautiful grace, His eternal life of divine friendship, the treasures and pleasures there are at His right hand — these are the riches of

God.

And because God is infinitely good, rich and divine in virtues and praises, because He is the light and there is no darkness in Him at all, therefore He is also infinitely blessed. He is the overflowing Fount of all good. Because of this, let it be clearly understood, there are no riches and there is no blessedness apart from Him. He who would seek riches and bliss in the abundance of earthly goods that he possesses and in the carnal enjoyment of them, who is not rich in God, and who knows nothing of the pure blessedness of His fellowship and friendship, that man is a fool. To live apart from God is death. It is good His face to see!

"O the depth of the riches!" There is amazement in the exclamation. The expression denotes more than the mere statement would convey: God is infinitely rich. For always we can have but a creaturely knowledge of the riches of God. God is infinite and we are finite. The finite can never comprehend the infinite. Our understanding of the riches of God, therefore, is limited by the measure of our creaturely capacity. Besides, we are earthy. And all the knowledge of God's riches we now possess assumes an earthly form. In glory we shall, no doubt, behold and experience far more of these riches of God than we do in our present state. For then we shall see face to face, we shall know as we are known, while now we can only see an enigma in a mirror.

But even in eternal glory we shall be finite. Never shall we comprehend the infinite God. Yet, such is the wonder of revelation that, while our knowledge of the riches of God is limited, we know at the same time that the riches themselves are infinite. Contemplating that which it pleased God to make known unto us of His riches, we realize that we are but gazing at the surface of a great deep, the mysteries of which we shall never be able to fathom, but the glories of which are suggested by what we behold on the surface. Thus the revelation of the riches of God kindles within the God-fearing heart a profound sense of wonder and adoration that causes him to cry out: "O the depth of the riches!"

These riches are, indeed, revealed. If it were not so, we could have no idea of them. God is the invisible One. We cannot find Him out. If we are to know Him, He must reveal Himself to us. In a sense you can also express this same truth concretely by saying: we can know God and His riches only through that which *is of Him*. Just as you can know a deep fountain only by the silvery sparkle of the crystal water springing forth above its surface, so you can receive an impression and knowledge of the unsearchable riches of God only through that which is displayed of these riches on the stage of our creaturely perception and understanding by those things that are of Him, out of God. That is why the apostle says in the last verse of our text, "For of him ... are all things." All things are out of Him. The contemplation of them, therefore, leads us to adore the depth of His riches.

Let us beware that we do not limit this expression. *All things* are out of Him. The things in heaven and the things on the earth; the things that were made in the beginning and the things that develop and become in the history of the world; the work of redemption and all that pertains to that work — all things, nothing excluded, are of God. The earth and its fullness, the heavens and their glory, the day that uttereth speech, the night that pours forth knowledge, and all that ever becomes of them in their progress through the history of this present time, from the "alpha" even unto the "omega," they are all out of Him. All things in their relation to one another, inorganic creatures and living creatures, brute

creatures and rational creatures, angels and men, Adam and Christ, creation and redemption, the Jews and the Gentiles, the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection the promise and the gospel, the calling and faith, the inheritance and eternal glory; yea, grace but also sin, Michael and Gabriel but also Satan, life but also death, heaven but hell too, each in his proper place in time and space, each serving his proper purpose and accomplishing the work assigned to him, all things are out of Him!

Do you hesitate to follow me in this exposition of "all things"? Or do you object strenuously to the statement that even sin and Satan and death and hell are included in the things that are out of God? On the basis of this statement do you conclude that we make God the author of sin? I am well aware that in our humanistic age, when many would rather listen to a sentimental love story than to the truth of the whole counsel of God, this will seem a hard doctrine. My answer to those who object to this basic truth of the Word of God is, first of all, that their own view of the matter, their own doctrine concerning sin and death and the devil is infinitely more cruel. For to them they are "accidents," evil powers that somehow were and are beyond the control of God, that are caused by the creature; they are evil powers which God will finally overcome, but not until they have wrought havoc with His creation! That, forsooth, is a hard doctrine indeed! But to turn with all things, good and evil, to a sovereign God, who with infinite wisdom and knowledge has determined all things that are and become and shall be, that is a truth so perfect in comfort and hope that I would never exchange it for the shallow sentimental love song of the modern gospel of man: Never do our hearts find rest, until they find rest in God, and only through the assurance that *all things* are of God can they find rest in Him indeed!

Secondly, I appeal to the text: It says: *all things* are of Him, and through Him, and unto Him: Surely, we may at least turn to the context of this statement to determine its implication. Well, in chapters nine to eleven the apostle had written of God's sovereign predestinating purpose, of the seed of the promise and the carnal seed, of election and reprobation, of showing mercy and hardening, of vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, of the fall of the Jews that stumbled at the Stone and the reconciliation of the world, of salvation for the Gentiles and salvation for the Jews that fell, of God's concluding them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on them all. *All these things* are surely of Him, it must be admitted. But how can all these things be of Him if not all the rest is also out of Him? Just try to exclude one thing from God's sovereign dominion, and the inevitable end will be that you leave nothing in His almighty hands! And, besides, how could anything be *unto* Him, if it were not of Him?

Finally, as to the objection that we make God the author of sin and evil, an Evil Source, if we include sin and the devil, death and hell in the things that are of Him, let us not forget that things do not *emanate* from God, but are freely determined by Him in His sovereign counsel: "All things" do not issue forth from God as water issues from a fountain. They do not radiate from Him as the light radiates from the sun. But they are sovereignly determined by His eternal will and counsel. There is no sin and evil in God. He is a light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. But, in order that He might make known His power and glory, He has certainly determined the vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction as the sovereign Potter. And, in order that He might lead all things to greater, to the greatest possible glory in Christ, He has holily willed that even Satan and sin should do their work: We must therefore insist that "all things," in this comprehensive sense of the word, are of Him!

This implies that we must humble ourselves very deeply, and that we must empty ourselves of all our

conceit, even of our religious, our pious conceit. For, from the truth that God is inexhaustibly rich, and that "all things" are of Him, it follows that you and I can never give Him anything so that He becomes obliged to us. For "who hath first given Him and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" God is *God*. He is always the Fountain, the overflowing Fountain: He is the ever-giving God. He never receives but what He first gave. You cannot make Him richer than He is. You cannot bring ought to Him that is not already His. You cannot oblige Him to yourself, so that He must recompense you.

What would you think of a foolish beggar, who, when a millionaire gives him a hundred dollars, would say, "And now I would like to do something for you in return," and so saying would give him a penny? Would not the rich benefactor consider such would-be gratitude an abominable foolishness? Yet, this is but a very weak illustration of the religious foolishness that speaks of giving something or doing something for God as a recompense for the riches of His benevolence. He is infinitely rich. Shall we, then, bring a speck of dust, which, besides, is His already, to Him to increase His riches? He is the ever flowing Fountain. Shall we turn to an ever sparkling fountain and pour a cupful of water into it? Or shall we say that we did something first in the matter of our salvation, be it ever so small, and that now we expect a recompense of Him? Shall we say that we showed our willingness to "accept Christ," and that therefore He gave us the living faith and saved us?

God forbid! All things are of Him! Never shall we take our little cups and try to pour a tiny drop into the beautiful and ever sparkling Fountain of God's riches. On the contrary, always we shall turn to that Fountain to fill our cups and drink, and having drunk we shall glorify Him with thanksgiving by falling prostrate before Him in worship and saying, "O the depth of the riches!" That is religion!

The Infallible Artificer

But there is more. All things are not only out of God according to His everlasting good pleasure, but they are also *through* Him. He is not only the ultimate Source of all things, He is also the almighty Executive. He is not only the ever flowing Fountain, He is also the infallible Artificer of all things. For: "O the depth of knowledge! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For all things are through Him!"

God does a perfect work. Of this the text speaks here. It speaks of His unsearchable judgments in, and of His inscrutable ways through the "history" of this world, and of the knowledge and mind of the Lord revealed in these judgments and ways. All things are through Him. We do not have to repeat here what we said about the implication of "all things." Just as all things in creation and redemption, in heaven and on earth, are out of God, so that He is their eternal Planner, so all things, in the same comprehensive sense of the word, are *through* Him, so that He is their Artificer.

When the text says that all things are of God, it refers to Him as the eternal Counselor. All things are eternally in His mind and will. In Him they have their conception. But when it declares that they are also through Him, it refers to the truth that He is also the sole and almighty Executor of His own eternal counsel. With man this is different. One is the architect, another is the builder. The architect can make the plans, but he cannot erect the edifice. This he must leave to others. For the realization of his plans he is dependent both on men and means. And while he, perhaps, can vouchsafe the flawlessness of his

plans, he cannot guarantee the perfection of the building. But with God is absolute sovereignty and perfect control of all His work from its conception to its consummation. For He is not only the Source, but also the Executor of all things. Through Him are all things. He works through Himself alone. He is not dependent upon means. Through Him is creation, and through Him is redemption. Through Him is Christ. For He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him is the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection. Through Him Christ now sitteth at His right hand and has all power in heaven and on earth. Through Him is the church and through Him is all the salvation of every individual believer in his particular position in the body of Christ. Through Him is our rebirth, our calling and our faith, our sonship and our righteousness, our eternal life and glory. All things are through Him!

Do not misunderstand this. The meaning is not that He accomplishes His work and that after it is accomplished it exists independently from Him. On the contrary, it means that nothing in all the wide creation, whatever power it be, of life or of death, of light or of darkness, can exist or operate but by His continuous influx into all things. All that is in heaven and all that is on earth in the sphere of creation exists only through Him from moment to moment. The moment He would cease to work, all things would sink back in the darkness of Nothing. All things in the realm of redemption depend continuously upon His operation.

Christ, the church, salvation, the life of your rebirth, your faith, your hope, your love, He holds them all in the hollow of His hand. From moment to moment they are and operate only through His divine operation. All through "history" He controls and directs and sovereignly governs all things, so that they do His will, so that His counsel is realized, so that they proceed from the "alpha" to the "omega" along the way which He has determined for them all!

O the depth of knowledge! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? It is especially when we contemplate the marvelous truth that all things are through God, contemplate it in the light of the revelation in Christ it has pleased Him to give unto us, that we adore the infinite knowledge of God. For, indeed, we see a little of this glorious knowledge, and the glimpse we obtain of it is sufficient to cause us to fall down in worship. Yet, we realize that it is only a glimpse into the surface of this knowledge, and we are pressed to cry out, "O the depth!" His judgments are unsearchable, yet as unsearchable we contemplate them. His ways are past finding out, yet we know the perfection of His inscrutable ways!

When the apostle here speaks of God's judgments we must take the word, not in the narrower sense of judicial verdicts and their execution, but in the wider denotation of decisions. As always, all things are through God. As He is the sole Executor of all things throughout history, this history of the world is full of divine decisions. He always decides about all things. And He never fails. Always He judges what must be done next, and always His judgment is perfect. Never does He make a mistake. Never does He have to retrace His steps because of a faulty judgment or mistaken judgment. When it seems to us that things go wrong, His judgment is still perfect.

His ways are His advances and their direction through history, the direction He takes and the means He employs to reach the end He has in view. They are His ways with creation, His ways with the church, His ways with the individual believer. These ways are inscrutable, they are "past finding out." They are higher than our ways. We cannot fathom them. Often appear to us as leading in the wrong direction, to

the victory of the powers of darkness, to the defeat of the cause of God, to the destruction of the church of Christ. They are deep. They lead through sin and death into righteousness and life, through the cross into the resurrection, through the suffering of this present time into the glory that shall be revealed in us. They lead through the stumbling of the Jews to the reconciliation of the world, through the unbelief of all to mercy upon all! But however dark and deep they may be, they are always right. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose!

And so these unsearchable decisions and inscrutable ways, of which we obtain a glimpse as we contemplate the truth that all things are through Him, testify of the depth of God's knowledge. For known unto God are all His works from the beginning. To know is to penetrate into the being, the nature, the relation, and the purpose of anything. But let us not forget that we are speaking here of the knowledge of God, of divine, of eternal, of infinitely perfect, of sovereign knowledge. God does not know things because He takes cognizance of them, because He perceives and investigates them. He knows all things in and through Himself. Things are because He knows them. His knowledge is first and things are a copy, a revelation of them. And, therefore, God's knowledge is not in part and momentary, but complete and eternal. All that is, all that ever was, all that ever shall be, He has eternally in mind. Clearly they stand before His divine consciousness.

We have only a little, momentary snapshot of the works of God, very much limited by space and time, as well as by the capacity of our knowledge. But God knows the whole and every part of it in its proper place and purpose and significance. He knows creation in its relation to and significance for redemption; He knows sin in its relation to the manifestation of grace; He knows Adam as the figure of Him that was to come; He knows death as a means unto the more abundant life; He knows the suffering of this present time in its significance for the exceeding weight of glory; He knows the "alpha" in its relation to the

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"omega," the beginning and the end, and all that must lead from the beginning to the end. All this knowledge is eternally before God's consciousness. We are, at any one moment, conscious of only a small part of our actual store of knowledge. The rest does not cross the threshold of our consciousness. But in God there is no sub-consciousness. He knows all things that are and were and shall be eternally with a perfectly conscious knowledge. Always they are before His divine mind.

So we can understand that God's ways are perfect and infallible, and that He never retraces His steps. We often do. We try to make something, and in the process of making it we discover something too late, something that we should have taken into consideration in the construction of what we are attempting to make. The result is that we make mistakes, that we have to retrace our steps and do things over. With God this is never the case. All things are known to Him from the beginning. His decisions are infallible. His ways are perfect. His mind is His alone. No one ever knew it. It is sovereign. All things are through Him only. He is the infallible Artificer!

Let us not forget that we have only tried to stammer a little about the infinite knowledge of God. As we discussed the glorious contents of these three chapters of the book of Romans, we saw a little of it, and that little was even glorious and adorable. But at the same time we realize that behind and beyond that

little which we see and attempt to understand of the knowledge of God there is an infinite mystery, there are unfathomable depths, so that the end of our contemplation is pure adoration of the Most High: "O the depth of knowledge! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! To Him be glory for ever!"

The Sole End of All Things

Thus we understand, too, that all things must needs be *unto* Him. He is the sole End of all things. That is, their only purpose is that they shall show forth His praises and manifest and sing His glory. I would emphasize this. He is the *only* End of all things, not merely the *highest*, but the *sole* purpose. Not the happiness of the creature is the end of all things, even though the creature is supremely blessed when it may willingly serve this purpose, the glory of God. Not even our salvation is the end, although it is salvation, indeed, that we may sing of, to the glory of the Most High. No, God, and He alone, is the End.

Who or what else could be? Is not He the only Good and the overflowing Fountain of all good? Is not He the only One who is absolutely desirable, at whose right hand alone there are pleasures forevermore? Is not He the implication of all infinite perfections, the only Light, in whom there is no darkness at all? Is there, then, any God or Good above Him or next to Him or under Him, that could be called an end of all things? And is He not the Beginning of all things, and therefore also the End? Is there, then, in all the wide creation, or will there be in the new heavens and the new earth, any goodness, any perfection, any beauty, or any glory that is not a reflection of His glory, and that, therefore, must point to Him as its eternal Source?

So it is: "all things are unto Him." They all return to Him, even as they are out of Him and through Him. They all point to Him as God, as the eternal and only Good. Just as all the rays of the sun, if you but trace them, point to the sun, so all things in their purpose and end point to God. That is really the meaning of the expression "all things are unto Him." They all speak of Him. They all declare His glory. If you but look at them rightly, contemplate them in the right light, you will find that they all point to Him and say, "There He is, the inexhaustible Fountain, infinite in riches, of whom are all things; the infallible Artificer, through whom are all things; the only God, adorable for ever!"

And again, this is true of *all things*. Do not mistake the meaning of these words. They do not say that all things *will* be unto Him, when once they are finished in the new heavens and the new earth. Oh, it is true that then we shall behold the reality of this truth as now we can only embrace it by faith. Then the present darkness shall be dissipated and we shall walk in the light of His countenance in perfection and we shall see face to face, and in seeing we shall be blessed forevermore. But the text does not refer to this only. It declares that all things *are* unto Him. The statement is true now. They are, they always were, and they always shall be unto Him. There never was a moment in history when all things were not unto Him, and unto Him alone. There never was, nor is, nor shall be a creature that is not unto Him, whether it is such consciously or unconsciously, willingly or in spite of its own intentions. All things in heaven and on earth, in all their history and development, things in creation and things in redemption, good things and evil things, angels and devils, righteous and wicked, grace and sin, life and death, heaven and hell —

all things were and are and forever shall be unto Him! Such is the scheme of things in time and in eternity. They must all be subservient to the manifestation and glorification of His infinite riches!

This can never fail. For even as God is infinite in knowledge, so there is no end to His wisdom. O the depth of wisdom! And, mark you well, it is His wisdom alone that is the cause of the scheme of all things. For "who hath been His counselor?"

Wisdom differs from knowledge. It is that virtue of God according to which He devised and works out all things according to a scheme in which all things are perfectly adapted to one another, and according to which they are together adapted to the highest manifestation of the glory of the Most High. That, the highest possible revelation of His goodness, the highest possible creaturely realization of His own covenant-life of divine friendship in His eternal tabernacle, is His purpose. And unto the realization of that purpose, His own glory, all things are adapted. Christ, the elect church, reprobation, angels and devils, creation and the Fall, sin and death, grace and redemption, the incarnation and the cross, the resurrection and the exaltation, the final catastrophe and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth — all things are given their own place in God's eternal counsel, and are worked out accordingly, so that they all tend harmoniously to that one end: God Himself! For all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's! Oh, the depth of wisdom! All things are unto Him!

And, beloved, because that is God's scheme of things, because no one ever gave Him counsel, and because in His infinite wisdom He arranged all things in such a way that He is the End of them all, therefore there is but one proper position for us to take in the midst of all things, and that is the position in which we gladly and willingly and adoringly take upon our lips the final doxology, which constitutes the close of our text and of the whole of this section of the epistle to the Romans: "to whom be glory for ever, Amen!"

You see, this is, indeed, the basic note of all things, now and forever. It does not make any difference, as to the fact, whether you and I confess this or deny it. Such is surely God's plan for things. All things are surely unto Him. That is true of sin and death. That is true of the devil and his demons. That is true of "the world" and all the powers of darkness. That shall be eternally true of hell and the damned. All things shall forever declare that He is God, and that He is Good, the Light in whom there is no darkness at all. All things are unto Him, whether you shall sing it out in eternal joy, or witness of it by your wailing and the gnashing of your teeth.

But there is a difference. It is the awful audacity and shame, but also the unspeakable folly of sin, that it makes us stand in the midst of this divine scheme of all things and say, "I deny it." That is, indeed, sin! That is the pride and conceit of the devil, that it imagines and acts and speaks as if it could twist and distort and change this divine scheme in such a way that all things are unto the creature. That is the lie! "Ye shall be like God!" It is the pride of the devil, and of all that are in alliance with him, that they declare: "We will make all things end in us, point to us, glorify us, and we will stand in the midst of God's plan for things and deny that all things are unto Him!" But that is, at the same time, the inexpressible folly of sin. For God's plan is unalterable. He does not change. He will declare His power and glory in realizing forever His own scheme of all things. He always reaches His purpose, in time and in eternity. And the only result for the wicked, who stands awry in the midst of the divine scheme of all things, is that all things work against him, work to his eternal destruction, crush him into everlasting desolation and outer darkness!

The fundamental question, therefore, as far as your and my eternal salvation and blessedness are concerned, is whether our position, our spiritual ethical attitude, is in accord with this divine plan and end of all things, the only end we must surely serve. God's counsel you can never change. Glorify Him you shall, whether willingly and in eternal bliss, or in spite of yourselves and in eternal desolation. Another purpose than the glory of God there is not, in heaven or in earth or in hell, and there never will be. All things are unto Him!

Blessed, therefore, is the man who has his delight in that only scheme of all things, and who joins in with the doxology of the close of our text: "to whom be glory for ever, Amen!" That is life from death. That is light from darkness. That is resurrection. That is eternal life. That is heavenly bliss. And that is the marvelous fruit of the grace of the Lord Jesus! Grace it is that makes us worthy of this blessed life, that expresses itself forever in adoration of God. Grace it is that so changes our inmost heart and our whole life, that instead of denying we confess, instead of cursing we bless, instead of raising our rebellious fists in the face of the Almighty we fall prostrate before Him in the dust and cry out: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That outcry is the principal indication that our position has been changed from one of opposition into one of harmony with God's own scheme of all things. In that position we are ready to take this doxology upon our lips: "to Him be glory for ever, Amen!" And in thus declaring the praises of the Most High we shall forever be blessed!

Amen.