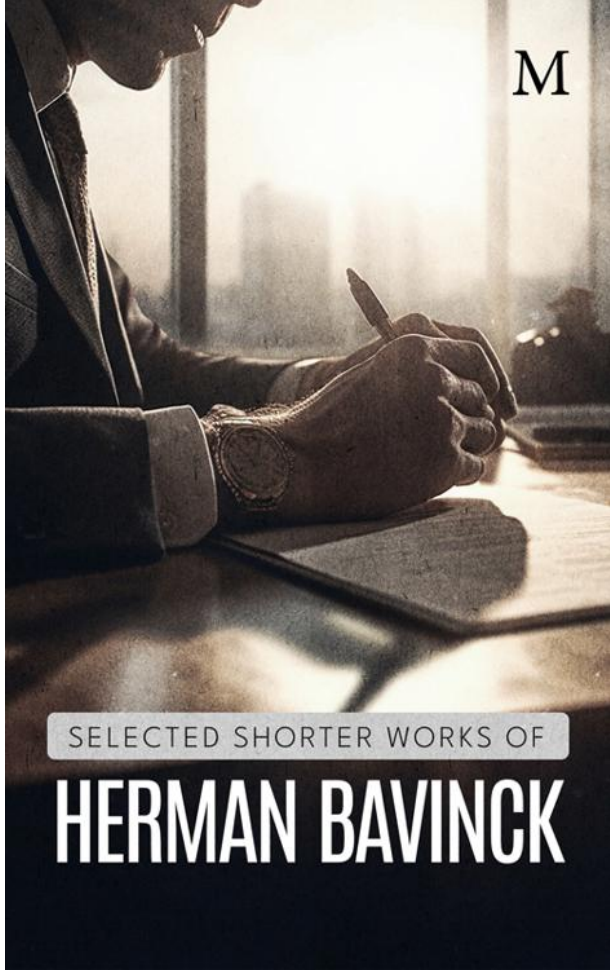


A close-up, low-angle shot of a man in a dark suit and tie, leaning over a desk. He is holding a pen and writing in a notebook. The scene is lit with warm, golden light from a window in the background, creating a soft glow and long shadows. The man's face is partially visible in profile, looking down at his work. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

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HERMAN BAVINCK



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Selected Works of Herman Bavinck

Edited by John Hendryx

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The Origin, Essence, and Purpose of Man

Herman Bavinck

The account of the origin of heaven and earth converges in the first chapter of Genesis upon the creation of man. The creation of the other creatures, of heaven and earth, of sun and moon and stars, of plants and animals, is reported in brief words, and there is no mention made at all of the creation of the angels. But when Scripture comes to the creation of man it lingers long over him, describes not only the fact but also the manner of his creation, and returns to the subject for further broad consideration in the second chapter.

This particular attention devoted to the origin of man serves already as evidence of the fact that man is the purpose and end, the head and crown of the whole work of creation. And there are various material details which also illuminate the superior rank and worth of man among the creatures.

In the first place, there is the special counsel of God which precedes the creation of man. At the calling into being of the other creatures, we read simply that God spoke and by His speaking brought them into existence. But when God is about to create man He first confers with Himself and rouses Himself to make men in His image and likeness. This goes to indicate that especially the creation of man rests on deliberation, on Divine wisdom and goodness and omnipotence. Nothing of course came into existence by chance. But

the counsel and decision of God is far more clearly manifest in the making of man than in the creation of the other creatures.

Moreover, in this particular counsel of God, the special emphasis is placed on the fact that man is created after the image and likeness of God and therefore stands in an entirely different relationship to God than all other creatures. It is said of no other creatures, not even of the angels, that they were created in God's image and that they exhibit His image. They may possess hints and indications of one or several of God's attributes, but of man alone it is affirmed that he is created after God's image and in His likeness.

Scripture further emphasizes the fact that God created, not one man, but men, according to His likeness. At the conclusion of Genesis 1:27 they are designated as male and female. It is not man alone, nor woman exclusively, but both of them, and those two in interdependence, who are the bearers of the image of God. And, according to the blessing that is pronounced upon them in verse 28, they are such image bearers not in and for themselves alone. They are that also in their posterity, and together with their posterity. The human race in each of its parts and in its entirety is organically created in the image and likeness of God.

Finally, Scripture expressly mentions that this creation of man in God's image must come to expression particularly in his dominion over all living beings and in the subjection to Him of the whole earth. Because man is the child or offspring of God, he is king of the earth. Being children of God and heirs of the world are two things already closely related to each other, and inseparably related to each other, in the creation.

The account of the creation of man in the first chapter of Genesis is elaborated and amplified in the second chapter (Gen. 2:4b-25). This second chapter of Genesis is sometimes mistakenly designated the second creation story. This is erroneous because the creation of heaven and earth is assumed in this chapter, and is referred to in verse 4b in order to introduce the manner in which God formed man from the dust of the earth. The whole emphasis in this second chapter falls on the creation of man and on the way in which this took place. The big difference between the first and second chapter of Genesis comes out in these details which are told us in the second concerning the forming of man.

The first chapter tells of the creation of heaven and earth and lets these lead up to the making of man. In this chapter man is the last creature called into existence by God's omnipotence. He stands at the end of the series of creatures as the lord of nature, the king of the earth. But the second chapter, from Genesis 2:4b on, begins with man, proceeds from him as starting point, sets him at the center of things, and then relates what happened in the creation of man, how this took place for the man and for the woman, what dwelling place was appointed for him, with what vocation he was entrusted, and what purpose and destiny was his. The first chapter speaks of man as the end or purpose of the creation; the second deals with him as the beginning of history. The content of the first chapter can be comprised in the name *creation*, and that of the second chapter in the name *Paradise*.

There are three particulars which are told us in this second chapter concerning man's origin, and which serve as the elaboration of what is contained in the first chapter.

In the first place there is a fairly broad treatment of the first dwelling place of man. The first chapter simply stated in general terms that man was created after God's image and that he was appointed lord over the whole earth. But it gives no hint as to where on the face of the globe man first saw the light of life and where he first lived. This we are, however, told in the second chapter. When God had made the heaven and the earth, and when He had called the sun, moon, and stars, the plants and birds, the animals of the land and those of the water, then no specific place had yet been set aside as a dwelling for man. Hence God rests before He creates man and prepares for him a garden or Paradise in the country of Eden, east of Palestine. That garden is arranged in a particular way. God lets all kinds of trees come up out of the soil there—trees beautiful to see and serviceable for food. Two of these trees are designated by name, the tree of life planted in the middle of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The garden was laid out in such a way that a river which had its point of origin higher up in the territory of Eden flowed through it, and then forked out into four streams, the Pison, the Gihon, the Tiger, and the Euphrates.

A great deal of toil and effort has in the course of the centuries gone into trying to determine where Eden and the garden of Eden were located. Various representations have been put forward about that one river that came up in Eden and flowed through the garden, about the four rivers into which that major stream parted, about the name of the territory of Eden, and about the garden inside it. But all of these representations have remained conjectures. None has been established by solid proof. Two interpretations would, however, seem to deserve the preference. The first is the one according to which Eden lay towards the north in Armenia; the other holds that it was farther south, in Babylonia. It is hard to decide between these two. The details given in Scripture are no longer adequate to determine

just where this territory lay. But when we recall that the people who sprang from Adam and Eve, though banned from Eden, nevertheless at first lingered in that general area (Gen. 4:16), and that Noah's ark after the flood came to rest on Mount Ararat (Gen. 8:4), and that the new mankind after the flood spread out from Babel over the earth (Gen. 11:8-9), then it can hardly be doubted that the cradle of humanity stood in that area bounded by Armenia on the North and Shinar in the South. In modern times scholarship has come to reinforce this teaching of Scripture. True, in the past, historical investigation made all sorts of guesses about the original home of mankind, seeking it, in turn, in all parts of the earth, but it is more and more retracing its steps. Ethnology, the history of civilization, philology all point to Asia as the continent where once the cradle of mankind stood.

A second feature to attract attention in Genesis 2 is the probationary command given to man. Originally this first man was simply called *the man (ha-adam)* for he was alone for a while and there was no one beside him who was like him. It is not until Gen. 4:25 that the name Adam occurs without the definite article. There the name first becomes individual. This indicates clearly that the first man, who for a while was the only human being, was the beginning and origin and head of the human race. As such he received a double task to perform: *first*, to cultivate and preserve the garden of Eden, and, *second*, to eat freely of all the trees in the garden except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The first task defines his relationship to the earth, the second his relationship to heaven. Adam had to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, and this he must do in a twofold sense: he must cultivate it, open it up, and so cause to come up out of it all the treasures which God has stored there for man's use; and he must also

watch over it, safeguard it, protect it against all evil that may threaten it, must, in short, secure it against the service of corruption in which the whole of creation now groans.

But man can fulfill this calling over against the earth only if he does not break the bond of connection which unites him with heaven, only if he continues to believe God at His word and to obey His commandment. The twofold task is essentially therefore one task. Adam must have dominion over the earth, not by idleness and passivity but through the work of his head and heart and hand.

But in order to rule, he must serve; He must serve God who is his Creator and Lawgiver. Work and rest, rule and service, earthly and heavenly vocation, civilization and religion, culture and *cultus*, these pairs go together from the very beginning. They belong together and together they comprise in one vocation the great and holy and glorious purpose of man. All culture, that is, all work which man undertakes in order to subdue the earth, whether agriculture, stock breeding, commerce, industry, science, or the rest, is all the fulfillment of a single Divine calling. But if man is really to be and remain such he must proceed in dependence on and in obedience to the Word of God. Religion must be the principle which animates the whole of life and which sanctifies it into a service of God.

A third particular of this second chapter of Genesis is the gift of the woman to the man and the institution of marriage. Adam had received much. Though formed out of the dust of the earth, he was nevertheless a bearer of the image of God. He was placed in a garden which was a place of loveliness and was richly supplied with everything good to behold and to eat. He received the pleasant task of dressing the garden and subduing the earth, and in this he had to walk in accordance with the commandment of God, to eat freely of

every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But no matter how richly favored and how grateful, that first man was not satisfied, not fulfilled. The cause is indicated to him by God Himself. It lies in his solitude. It is not good for the man that he should be alone. He is not so constituted, he was not created that way. His nature inclines to the social—he wants company. He must be able to express himself, reveal himself, and give himself. He must be able to pour out his heart, to give form to his feelings. He must share his awarenesses with a being who can understand him and can feel and live along with him. Solitude is poverty, forsakenness, gradual pining and wasting away. How lonesome it is to be alone!

And He who created man thus, with this kind of need for expression and extension can in the greatness and grace of His power only choose to supply the need. He can only create for him a helpmeet who goes along with him, is related to him, and suits him as counterpart. The account tells us in verses 19 to 21 that God made all the beasts of the field and all the fowls of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see whether among all those creatures there was not a being who could serve Adam as a companion and a helper. The purpose of these verses is not to indicate the chronological order in which animals and man were made, but rather to indicate the material order, the rank, the grades of relationship in which the two sorts of creatures stand over against each other. This relationship of rank is first indicated in the fact that Adam named the animals.

Adam therefore understood all the creatures, he penetrated their natures, he could classify and subdivide them, and assign to each of them the place in the whole of things which was their due. If, accordingly, he discovered no being among all those creatures who was related to himself, this was not the consequence of ignorance nor of foolhardy arrogance or pride; rather, it stemmed from the fact that

there existed a difference in *kind* between him and all other creatures, a difference not of degree merely but of essence. True, there are all kinds of correspondences between animal and man: both are physical beings, both have all kinds of need and desire for food and drink, both propagate offspring, both possess the five senses of smell, taste, feeling, sight, and hearing, and both share the lower activities of cognition, awareness, and perception. Nonetheless, man is different from the animal. He has reason, and understanding, and will and in consequence of these he has religion, morality, language, law, science, and art. True, he was formed from the dust of the earth, but he received the breath of life from above. He is a physical, but also a spiritual, rational, and moral being. And that is why Adam could not find a single creature among them all that was related to him and could be his helper. He gave them all names, but not one of them deserved the exalted, royal name of *man*.

Then, when man could not find the thing he sought, then, quite apart from man's own witting and willing, and without contributive effort on his own part, God gave man the thing he himself could not supply. The best things come to us as *gifts*; they fall into our laps without labor and without price. We do not earn them nor achieve them: we get them for nothing. The richest and most precious gift which can be given to man on earth is woman. And this gift he gets in a deep sleep, when he is unconscious, and without any effort of will or fatigue of the hand. True, the seeking, the looking about, the inquiring, the sense of the need precedes it. So does the *prayer*. But then God grants the gift sovereignly, alone, without our help. It is as though He conducts the woman to the man by His own hand.

Thereupon the first emotion to master Adam, when he wakes up and sees the woman before him, is that of marvelling and gratitude. He does not feel a stranger to her, but recognizes her immediately as

sharing his own nature with him. His recognition was literally a recognition of that which he had felt he missed and needed, but which he could not himself supply. And his marvelling expresses itself in the first marriage hymn or epithalamium ever to be sounded on the face of the earth: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." Adam therefore remains the source and head of the human race. The woman is not merely created *alongside of* him but *out of* him (1 Cor. 11:8). Just as the stuff for making Adam's body was taken from the earth, so the side of Adam is the basis of the life of Eve. But just as out of the dust of the earth the first man became a living being through the breath of life which came from above, so out of Adam's side the first woman first became a human being by the creative omnipotence of God. She is out of Adam and yet is another than Adam. She is related to him and yet is different from him. She belongs to the same kind and yet in that kind she occupies her own unique position. She is dependent and yet she is free. She is *after* Adam and *out of* Adam, but owes her existence to God alone. And so she serves to help the man, to make his vocation of subduing the earth possible. She is his helper, not as mistress and much less as slave, but as an individual, independent, and free being, who received her existence not from the man but from God, who is responsible to God, and who was added to man as a free and unearned gift.

Thus the Scripture reports the origin of man, of both the male and the female. Such is its thought about the institution of marriage and the beginning of the human race. But in these days a very different construction is put upon these things, and this is done in the name of science and allegedly with the authority of science. And as this new construction penetrates farther and farther until it reaches even the

masses of the people, and since it is of the greatest importance for a world and life view, it is necessary to devote our attention to it for a few moments, and to subject the basis on which it rests to an appraisal.

If a person repudiates the Scriptural account of the origin of the human race, it becomes necessary of course to give some other account of it. Man exists, and no one can escape asking the question where he came from. If he does not owe his origin to the creative omnipotence of God, he owes it to something else. And then no solution remains except to say that man gradually developed himself out of the antecedent lower beings and worked himself up to his present high position in the order of being. *Evolution* is, therefore, the magic word which in our times must somehow solve all problems about the origin and essence of creatures. Naturally, since the teaching of creation is repudiated, the evolutionist must accept that something or other existed in the beginning inasmuch as nothing can come from nothing. The evolutionist, however, in view of this fact, proceeds from the wholly arbitrary and impossible assumption that matter and energy and motion existed eternally. To this he adds that before our solar system came into being, the world consisted simply of a chaotic gaseous mass. This was the starting point of the evolution which gradually resulted in our present world and all of its creatures. It is by evolution that the solar system and the earth came into existence. By evolution the layers of the earth and the minerals came into being. By evolution the animate came into being out of the inanimate through an endless series of years. By evolution plants, and animals, and men came to be. And inside the pale of the human, it was again by evolution that sexual differentiation, marriage, family, society, state, language, religion, morality, law, science, art and all the other values of civilization in a regular order came into existence. If only one may proceed from this one assumption that

matter and energy and motion existed eternally, then, it is supposed, one no longer needs to postulate a God. Then the world is self-explanatory. Science, it is then believed, constitutes God entirely unnecessary.

The theory of evolution goes on to develop its idea of the origin of man in the following way. When the earth had cooled off, and thus become fit for the birth of living creatures, life arose under the circumstances then extant, very probably in such a way that at first inanimate albuminous combinations formed themselves which, affected by various influences, developed various properties, and that these albuminous entities by way of combination and mingling with each other gave rise to protoplasm, the first germ of life. Thence began the biogenetic development, the development of living beings. It was a process which may have taken a hundred million years of time.

This protoplasm formed the albuminous nucleus of the cell which is now regarded as the basic constituent of all living beings, whether plants, or animals, or men. Unicellular *protozoa* were thus the earliest organisms. According to whether these were mobile or immobile, they developed in time into plants or into animals. Among the animals the *infusoria* stand lowest in the scale, but out of these there gradually come up, by way of various intermediate and transitional stages, the higher kinds of animals, known as the vertebrate, invertebrate, mollusks and radiate animals. Thereupon the vertebrate animals are again divided into four classes: fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals. This group, in turn, is divided into three orders: the duck-billed, the marsupials, and the placentate animals; and this last is again subdivided into the rodents, the ungulate animals, the beasts of prey, and the primates. The primates in turn are classified as semi-apes, apes, and anthropoids.

When we compare the physical organism of man with that of these various animals, we discover, according to the evolutionist, that man, in an order of increasing resemblance, is closest in kind to the vertebrates, the mammals, the placentate animals, and the primates, and that he resembles most closely of all the anthropoids, represented by the orang and the gibbon in Asia, and by the gorilla and the chimpanzee in Africa. These are therefore to be regarded as the closest relatives of man. True, they differ from man in size, shape, and the like, but they are altogether like him in their basic physical structure. All the same, man did not come from one of those kinds of apes now extant, but from an anthropoid long since extinct. Apes and men are according to this theory of evolution blood relatives, belong to the same race, though they are to be regarded rather as nephews and nieces than as brothers and sisters.

Such is the idea of the theory of evolution. Such, according to it, was the course of events. But the evolutionist also felt called upon to say something about the way in which all this took place. It was easy enough to say that plants and animals and men had formed an unbroken and rising series of beings. But the evolutionist felt that he ought to do something towards demonstrating that such a development was actually possible, that an ape, for instance, could gradually come to be a man. Charles Darwin in 1859 attempted such a demonstration. He noticed that plants and animals —roses and doves, for example —could by artificially assisted natural selection be brought to exhibit significant modifications. Thus he hit upon the idea that in nature, too, such a natural selection might have been operative, a selection not artificially controlled by human intervention, but unconscious, arbitrary, natural. With this thought a light dawned on him. For by accepting such a theory of natural selection he supposed himself in a position to explain how plants and animals gradually undergo changes, how they can overcome defects

in their organization and can achieve advantages, and that in such a way they constantly equip themselves better for successful competition with others in the struggle for existence. For, according to Darwin, life is always and everywhere in the whole creation just that: a struggle for existence. Superficially observed, it may seem that there is peace in nature, but this is a deceptive appearance. Rather, there is that constant struggle for life and the necessaries for life, for the earth is too small and too meager to supply all the beings that are born into it with the requisite foods. Hence millions of organisms perish because of need; only the strongest survive. And these strongest ones, who are superior to the others because of some property they have developed, gradually transfer their acquired, advantageous characteristics to their posterity.

Hence there is progress and ever higher development. Natural selection, the struggle for existence, and the transfer of old and newly acquired characteristics explain, according to Darwin, the appearance of new species, and also the transition from animal to man.

In evaluating this theory of evolution it is necessary above all to make a sharp distinction between the *facts* to which it appeals and the *philosophical* view with which it looks at them. The facts come down to this: that man shares all kinds of characteristics with other living beings, more particularly with the higher animals, and among these in turn especially with the apes. Naturally, these facts were for the most part known before Darwin also, for the correspondence in physical structure, in the several organs of the body and in their activities, in the five senses, in the perceptions and awarenesses, and the like, is something which all who look may see, and simply is not susceptible to denial. But the sciences of anatomy, biology, and

physiology, and also that of psychology, have in recent times investigated those corresponding characteristics much more thoroughly than was done before. The characteristics of resemblance have accordingly increased in number and importance. There were other sciences too which contributed their part to confirming and extending these similarities between man and animal. The science of embryology, for instance, indicated that a human being in its beginnings in the womb resembles a fish, an amphibian, and the lower mammals. Paleontology, which busies itself with the study of conditions and circumstances in ancient times, discovered remnants of human beings—skeletons, bones, skulls, tools, ornaments, and the like—which pointed to the fact that centuries ago some people in some parts of the earth lived in a very simple way. And ethnology taught that there were tribes and peoples who were widely separated both spiritually and physically from the civilized nations.

When these facts, brought together from various sides, became known, philosophy soon busied itself with combining them into an hypothesis, the hypothesis of the gradual evolution of all things, and specifically also of man. This hypothesis did not come up after the facts were discovered nor because of them, but existed a long time ago, was sponsored by a number of philosophers, and was now applied to the facts, some of which were newly discovered. The old hypothesis, the old theory, now came to rest, it was supposed, on the firmly founded facts. A sort of hurrah went up because of the fact that now all the riddles of the world, except that one of the eternal matter and energy, were solved and all secrets were discovered. But hardly had this proud edifice of the evolutionary philosophy been built when the attack upon it began and it started to crumble. Darwinism, says a distinguished philosopher, came up in the 1860's, staged its triumphal procession in the 1870's, was thereupon

questioned by some few in the 1890's, and since the turn of the century has been strongly attacked by many.

The first and sharpest of the attacks was launched against the manner in which, according to Darwin, the several species had come into existence. The struggle for existence and natural selection did not suffice as an explanation. True, there is often a fierce struggle in the plant and animal worlds, and this struggle has a significant influence on their nature and existence. But it has by no means been proved that this struggle can cause new species to come into being. The struggle for existence can contribute to the strengthening of tendencies and abilities, of organs and potentialities, by way of exercise and effort. It can develop what is present already, but it cannot bring into being what does not exist. Besides, it is an exaggeration, as any one knows from his own experience, to say that always and everywhere nothing exists except struggle.

There is more than hatred and animosity in the world. There is also love and cooperation and help. The doctrine that there is nothing anywhere but warfare on the part of all against all is just as one-sided as the idyllic view of the eighteenth century that everywhere in nature there is rest and peace. There is room for many at the big table of nature, and the earth which God gave as a dwelling place for man, is inexhaustibly rich. Consequently, there are many facts and manifestations which have nothing to do with a struggle for existence. Nobody, for instance, can point out what the colors and figures of the snail's skin, the black color of the underbelly in many vertebrate animals, the graying of the hair with increasing age, or the reddening of the leaves in the autumn have to do with the struggle for existence. Nor is it true that in this struggle the strongest types always and exclusively win the victory, and that the weakest are always defeated. A so-called coincidence, a fortunate or unfortunate

circumstance, often mocks all such calculations. Sometimes a strong person is taken away in the strength of his years, and sometimes a physically weak man or woman reaches a ripe old age.

Such considerations led a Dutch scholar to substitute another theory for that of Darwin's natural selection, that of mutation, according to which the change of species did not take place regularly and gradually, but suddenly sometimes, and by leaps or jumps. But in this matter the question is whether these changes really represent new species or simply modifications in the species already extant. And the answer to that question hinges again on just what one means by species.

Not only the struggle for existence, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest have lost status in this century, but also the idea of the transfer of acquired characteristics. The transfer of natural, inherited characteristics from parents to children from the nature of the case tends rather to plead against than for Darwinism, inasmuch as it implies the constancy of species. Centuries on end men beget men and nothing else. Concerning the transfer of acquired as distinguished from inherited characteristics there is now so much difference of opinion that nothing can be said about it with certainty. This much, however, is certain, that acquired characteristics very often are not transferred by the parents to the children. Circumcision, for instance, was practised by some people for centuries, and yet left no traces in the children after all that while. Transfer by inheritance takes place only inside certain boundaries and does not effect any change of kind or species. If the modification is artificially induced, it must also be artificially maintained or else it is lost again. Darwinism, in short, cannot explain either heredity or change. Both are facts whose existence is not denied, but their

connection and relationship still lie beyond the pale of our knowledge.

More and more, therefore, Darwinism proper, that is, Darwinism in the narrower sense, namely, the effort to explain change of species in terms of the struggle for existence, natural selection, and the transfer of acquired characteristics was abandoned by the men of science. The prediction of one of the first and most eminent of opponents of Darwin's theory was literally fulfilled: namely, that this theory for explaining the mysteries of life would not last till even the end of the nineteenth century. But more important is the fact that criticism has not been directed against Darwin's theory alone but against the theory of evolution itself also. Naturally, facts remain facts and may not be ignored. But theory is something else, something built upon the facts by thought. And what became more and more evident was that the theory of evolution did not fit the facts but was even in conflict with them.

Geology, for instance, revealed that the lower and higher sorts of animals do not follow each other in sequence but as a matter of fact existed alongside of each other ages ago. Paleontology did not come up with a single piece of conclusive evidence for the existence of transitional types between the several species of organic beings. Still, according to Darwin's theory of extremely gradual evolution by way of extremely small changes, these types should have been present in quantity. Even the ardently sought after and energetically pursued intermediary type between man and the ape was not discovered. Embryology, it is true, does point to a certain external similarity between the various stages in the development of the embryo of man and that of other animal bodies. But this similarity is external for the simple reason that from an animal embryo a human being is never born, nor an animal from a human embryo. In other words, man and

animal go in different directions from conception on, even though the internal differences cannot then be perceived. Biology has up to this time offered so little support to the proposition that life generated itself that many now accept the impossibility of that and are returning to the idea of a special life force or energy. Physics and chemistry, in proportion to the extent to which they have pressed their investigations, have found more and more secrets and marvels in the world of the infinitely small, and have caused many to return to the thought that the basic constituents of things are not material entities but forces. And —to mention no further evidences —all the efforts that have been put forth to explain consciousness, freedom of the will, reason, conscience, language, religion, morality, and all such manifestations, as being solely the product of evolution have not been crowned with success. The origins of all these manifestations, like those of all other things, remain shrouded in darkness for science.

For it is important to note finally that when man makes his appearance in history he is already man according to body and soul, and he is already in possession, everywhere and at all times, of all those human characteristics and activities whose origins science is trying to discover. Nowhere can human beings be found who do not have reason and will, rationality and conscience, thought and language, religion and morality, the institutions of marriage and the family, and the like. Now if all of these characteristics and manifestations have gradually evolved, such an evolution must have taken place in prehistoric times, that is, in times of which we know *nothing* directly, and about which we make surmises only on the basis of a few facts perceived in later times. Any science, therefore, which wants to burrow through to that prehistoric time and to discover the origins of things there, *must* from the nature of the case take recourse to guesses, surmises, and suppositions. There is no

possibility here for evidence or proof in the strict sense. The doctrine of evolution generally and that of the descent of man from the animal particularly are not supported in the least by facts supplied by historic times. Of all the elements on which such theories are built nothing remains in the end but a philosophical world-view which wants to explain all things and all manifestations in terms of the things and manifestations themselves, leaving God out of account. One of the proponents of the evolutionary view admitted it bluntly: the choice is between evolutionary descent or miracle; since miracle is absolutely impossible we are compelled to take the first position. And such an admission demonstrates that the theory of the descent of man from lower animal forms does not rest on careful scientific investigation but is rather the postulate of a materialistic or pantheistic philosophy.

The idea of the origin of man is very closely related to that of the *essence* of man. Many nowadays talk differently, saying that man and the world, irrespective of what was their origin and their development in the past, are what they are now and will remain such.

This position is of course entirely correct: reality remains the same, irrespective of whether we form a true or a false idea of it. But the same holds of course concerning the origin of things. Even though we imagine that the world and mankind came into being in some particular fashion —gradually, say, during the course of centuries, by all sorts of infinitesimally small changes through self-generation—such a supposition does not, of course, change the actual origin. The world came into being in the way that it did, and not in the way we wish it or suppose it. But the *idea* we have of the origin of things is inseparably connected with the *idea* we have of the essence of things.

If the first is wrong, the second cannot be right. If we think that the earth and all the realms of nature, that all creatures and particularly also human beings, came into being without God solely through the evolution of energies which are residual in the world, such an idea must necessarily have a most significant influence on our conception of the *essence* of world and man.

True, the world and man will remain themselves irrespective of our interpretation; but *for us* they become different, they increase or decrease in worth and significance according as we think of their origin and their coming into existence.

This is so evident that it requires no ampler illumination or confirmation. But because the notion that we can think what we please about the origin of things, inasmuch as what we think of their essence is unaffected by it, is a notion which comes back again and again—for example, in the doctrine of Scripture, the religion of Israel, the person of Christ, religion, morality, and the like—it may be useful now, in consideration of the essence of man, to indicate the falsity of that notion once more. It is not difficult to do so. For if man has gradually evolved himself, so to speak, without God and solely through blindly operative natural forces, then it follows naturally enough that man cannot differ essentially from the animal, and that, in his highest development also, he remains an animal. For a soul distinguished from the body, for moral freedom and personal immortality, there is then no room at all. And religion, truth, morality, and beauty then lose their proper (absolute) character.

These consequences are not something which we impose on the proponents of the theory of evolution but something rather which they themselves deduce from it. Darwin, for instance, himself says that our unmarried women, if they were educated under the same

conditions as honey bees are, would think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers even as the working bees do, and mothers would try to murder their fertile daughters without anybody caring to intervene. According to Darwin, therefore, the whole of the moral law is a product of circumstances, and consequently it changes as the circumstances change. Good and evil, even as truth and falsehood, are therefore relative terms, and their meaning and worth are, like fashions, subject to the changes of time and place. So, too, according to others, religion was but a temporary aid, something of which man in his inadequacy for the struggle against nature made use, and which now too can serve as an opiate for the people, but something which on the long run will naturally die out and disappear when man has come into his full freedom. Sin and transgression, felony and murder do not constitute man guilty but are after-effects of the uncivilized state in which man formerly lived, and they decrease in proportion to the extent that man develops and society improves. Criminals are, accordingly, to be regarded as children, animals, or insane types, and should be dealt with accordingly. Prisons should give way to reformatories. In short, if man is not of Divine but of animal origin and has gradually "evolved" himself he owes everything to himself alone, and is his own lawgiver, master, and lord. All these inferences from the (materialistic or pantheistic) theory of evolution come to expression very clearly in contemporary science as well as in contemporary literature, art, and practical polity.

Reality, however, teaches something quite different. Man can make himself believe, if he wants to, that he has done everything himself and that he is bound by nothing. But in every respect he remains a dependent creature. He cannot do as he pleases. In his physical existence, he remains bound to the laws laid down for respiration, the circulation of the blood, digestion, and procreation. And if he

runs counter to these laws and pays no attention to them, he injures his health and undermines his own life. The same is true of the life of his soul and spirit. Man cannot think as he pleases, but is bound to laws which he has not himself thought out and laid down, but which are implied in the very act of thinking and come to expression in it. If he does not hold to those laws of thought, he snares himself in the net of error and falsehood. Nor can man will and act as he pleases. His will is under the discipline of reason and conscience; if he disregards this discipline and degrades his willing and acting to the level of arbitrariness and caprice, then there is sure to be self-reproach and self-indictment, regret and remorse, the gnawing and the compunction of the conscience.

The life of the soul, therefore, no less than the life of the body, is built on something other than caprice or accident. It is not a condition of lawlessness and anarchy but is from all sides and in all its activities determined by laws. It is subject to laws of truth and goodness and beauty and so it demonstrates that it has not generated itself. In short, man has from the very beginning his own nature and his own essence and these he cannot violate with impunity. And so much stronger is nature in these matters than theory that the adherents of the doctrine of evolution themselves keep talking of a human nature, of immutable human attributes, of laws of thought and ethics prescribed for man, and of an inborn religious sense. Thus the idea of the essence of man comes into conflict with the idea of his origin.

In Scripture, however, there is perfect agreement between the two ideas. There the essence of man corresponds to his origin. Because man, although he was formed from the dust of the earth according to the body, received the breath of life from above, and was created by God Himself, he is a unique being, has his own nature. The essence of his being is this: he exhibits the *image* of God and His *likeness*.

This image of God distinguishes man from both the animal and the angel. He has traits in common with both, but he differs from both in having his own unique nature.

The animals, too, of course, were created by God. They did not come into being of their own accord but were called into existence by a particular word of the power of God. Besides, they were immediately created in various kinds, even as the plants were. All men are descended from one parental pair and thus constitute one generation or race. This is not true of the animals; they have, so to speak, various ancestors. Hence it is remarkable that zoology up to this time has not yet succeeded in tracing all animals back to one type. It begins by at once designating some seven or some four major groupings or basic types.

Presumably it is therefore true that most of the animal types are not distributed over the whole earth, but live in particular areas. The fishes live in the water, the birds in the air, and the land animals for the most part are limited to definite territories: the polar bear, for instance, is found only in the far north, and the duck-billed platypus only in Australia. And so in Genesis it is specifically stated that God created the plants (1:11) and also the animals after their kind—that is, according to types. Naturally, this does not mean to say that the types which were originally created by God were exactly those into which science, that of Linnaeus, say, now classifies them. For one thing our classifications are always liable to error because our zoology is still defective and inclined to regard variants as types and vice versa. The artificial, scientific concept of an animal type is very difficult to establish and is always very different from the natural concept of type for which we are always still seeking. Moreover, in the course of centuries a great many animal kinds have died out or

been destroyed. From the remains, whether whole or blasted, which we have of some of them, it is evident that various kinds of animals, such as the mammoth, for instance, which no longer exists, once abounded in quantity. And in the third place it should be remembered that as a result of various influences big modifications and changes have taken place in the animal world which often make it difficult or even impossible for us to trace them back to an original type.

Further, it is remarkable that in the creation of the animals even as in that of the plants these were indeed called into being by a particular act of Divine power, but that in this act nature also performed a mediate service. Let the earth bring forth grass, we read in Genesis 1:11, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, and it was so (verse 12). The report is the same in Gen. 1:20: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth, and it was so (verse 21). Again in verse 24: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind, and it was so. Thus in each instance, nature is used by God as an instrument. It is the *earth* which, although naturally conditioned and equipped for it by God, brings forth all those creatures in their bountiful differentiation of kind.

This peculiar origin of animals sheds some light, too, on their nature. This origin demonstrates that the animals are much more closely related to the earth and to nature than man is. True, the animals are living beings, and as such they are distinguished from the inorganic, inanimate creatures. Hence, too, they are often called living souls (Gen. 1:20, 21, and 24). In the general sense of a principle of life the animals too have a soul.¹ But this *living* principle of the soul in the animal is still so closely bound to nature and to the metabolism of

matter that it cannot arrive at any independence or freedom, and it cannot exist when separated from the metabolism or circulation of matter. At death, therefore, the soul of the animal dies. From this it follows that the animals, at least the higher animals, do have the same sense organs as man, and can sense things (hear, see, smell, taste, and feel). They can form images or pictures, and relate these images to each other. But animals do not have reason, cannot separate the image from the particular, individual, and concrete thing. They cannot metamorphose the images nor raise them into concepts, cannot relate the concepts and so form judgments, cannot make inferences from the judgments nor arrive at decisions, and cannot carry out the decisions by an act of the will. Animals have sensations, images, and combinations of images; they have instincts, desires, passions. But they lack the higher forms of desire and knowledge which are peculiar to man; they have no reason and they have no will. All this comes to expression in the fact that animals do not have language, religion, morality, and the sense of beauty; they have no ideas of God, of the invisible things, of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Thus man is raised high above the animal plane. Between the two there is not a gradual transition but a great gulf. That which constitutes the very nature of man, his peculiar essence, namely his reason and his will, his thought and language, his religion and morality, and the like, are alien to the animal. Therefore the animal cannot understand man although man can understand the animal. Nowadays the science of psychology tries to explain the soul of man in terms of the soul of the animal, but this is to reverse the right order. The soul of man is the key for getting at the soul of the animal. The animal lacks what man has, but man has all that is peculiar to the animal.

This is not to say that now, too, man knows the nature of animals through and through. The whole world is for man a problem whose solution he seeks after and can seek after, and so too every animal is a living mystery. The significance of the animal by no means consists of the fact that the animal is useful to man, providing him with food and shelter, clothing and ornament. Much more is contained in the subduing and having dominion over the earth than that man should, in greed and egotism, freely turn everything to his advantage. The animal world has significance also for our science and art, our religion and morality. God has something, has much, to tell us in the animal. His thoughts and words speak to us out of the whole world, even out of the world of plants and animals. When botany and zoology trace out these thoughts, these sciences, as, indeed, the natural sciences in general, are glorious sciences, which no man, certainly no Christian, may despise. Moreover, how rich the animal world is in moral significance for man! The animal points to the boundary beneath, above which man must raise himself, and to the level of which he must never sink. Man can become an animal and less than an animal if he dulls the light of reason, breaks the bond with heaven, and seeks to satisfy all his desire in the earth. Animals are symbols of our virtues and our vices: the dog shows us the image of loyalty, the spider of industry, the lion of courage, the sheep of innocence, the dove of integrity, the hart of the soul thirsting for God; and, just so too, the fox is the image of cunning, the worm of misery, the tiger of cruelty, the swine of baseness, the snake of devilish guile, and the ape, who most nearly resembles the form of man, declares what an impressive physical organization amounts to without spirit, the spirit that is from above. In the ape man sees his own caricature.

Just as man differs by the image of God from the animals below him, he is distinguished by it also from the angels above him. The existence of such beings as angels cannot, apart from Scripture, be proved by scientific argument. Science knows nothing about them, cannot demonstrate that they exist, and cannot demonstrate that they do not exist.

But it is remarkable that a belief in the existence of beings who are above man occurs among all peoples and in all religions, and that men, when they have rejected the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the existence of angels, nevertheless, in all sort of superstitious forms, come back to a belief in the existence of supramundane beings. Our present generation abundantly proves this. Angels and devils are no longer held to exist and in their stead a belief has arisen in many circles in latent forces, mysterious natural powers, ghosts, apparitions, visitations of the deceased, animated stars, inhabited planets, Marsmen, living atoms, and the like. Interesting in connection with all these ancient and new manifestations is the position which the Holy Scripture has over against them. irrespective of whether falsehood or truth lies at the basis of them, Scripture forbids all fortune telling,² sorcery,³ astrology,⁴ necromancy,⁵ enchantment or the consulting of oracles,⁶ all conjuring and wizardry,⁷ and the like, and so makes an end of all superstition as well as of all unbelief. Christianity and superstition are sworn foes. There is no science, enlightenment, or civilization that can safeguard against superstition; only the word of God can protect us from it. Scripture makes man most profoundly dependent upon God, but precisely in so doing emancipates him from every creature. It puts man into a right relationship with nature and so makes a true natural science possible.

But the Scriptures do teach that there are angels, not the mythical creations of the human imagination, not the personifications of mysterious forces, not the deceased who have now climbed to higher levels, but spiritual beings, created by God, subject to His will, and called to His service. They are beings, therefore, of whom, in the light of Scripture, we can form a definite idea, and such as have nothing in common with the mythological figures of the Pagan religions. In knowledge they are raised high above man,⁸ and in power,⁹ but they were nevertheless made by the same God and the same Word (John 1:3 and Col. 1:16), and they have the same reason and the same moral nature, so that, for instance, it is said of the good angels that they obey God's voice and do His pleasure (Ps. 103: 20-21), and of the evil angels that they do not stand in the truth (John 8:44), that they lead astray (Eph. 6:11), and that they sin (2 Peter 2:4).

But, in spite of this correspondence between them, there exists a big difference between angels and men. It consists, in the first place, of the fact that the angels do not have soul and body, but are pure spirits (Heb. 1:14). True, at the time of their revelation they often appeared in physical forms, but the several forms in which they appeared¹⁰ point to the fact that these assumed forms of manifestation were temporary and that they changed in accordance with the nature of the mission. Never are the angels called souls, living souls, as the animals are and as man is. For soul and spirit differ from each other in this respect that the soul, too, is by nature spiritual, immaterial, invisible, and, even in man is a spiritually independent entity though it is always a spiritual power or spiritual entity which is oriented to a body, suits a body, and without such a body is incomplete and imperfect. The soul is a spirit designed for a physical life. Such a soul is proper to animals and particularly to man. When man loses his body in death, he continues to exist, but in an impoverished and bereft condition, so that the resurrection on the

last day is a restoration of the lack. But the angels are not souls. They were never intended for a bodily life and were not given earth but heaven as a dwelling place. They are pure spirits. This gives them great advantages over man, for they stand higher in knowledge and power, stand in a much freer relationship to time and space than men do, can move about more freely, and are therefore exceptionally well adapted to carrying out God's commands on earth.

But—and this is the second distinction between men and angels—those advantages have their opposite side. Because the angels are pure spirits, they all stand in a relatively loose relationship with reference to each other. They were all originally created together and they all continue to live alongside each other. They do not form one organic whole, one race or generation. True, there is a natural order among them. According to Scripture there are a thousand times a thousand angels,¹¹ and these are divided into classes: cherubims (Gen. 3:24), seraphims (Isa. 6), and thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:16; 2:10). And there is further distinction of rank within the groups: Michael and Gabriel have a special place among them.¹² Nevertheless, they do not constitute one race, are not blood relatives, did not beget each other. It is possible to speak of a mankind but not of an angelkind. When Christ assumed the human nature He was immediately related to all men, related by blood, and He was their brother according to the flesh. But the angels live next to each other, each one accountable for himself and not for the others, so that a portion of them could fall and a portion remain faithful to God.

The third distinction between man and angel is related' to the second. Because the angels are spirits and are not related to the earth, because they are not related by blood, and do not know such distinctions as father and mother, parents and children, brothers and

sisters, therefore there is a whole world of relationships and connections, ideas and emotions, desires and duties of which the angels know nothing. They may be more powerful than men, but they are not so versatile. They stand in fewer relationships, and in riches and depth of the emotional life man is far superior to the angel. True, Jesus says in Matthew 22:30 that marriage will end with this dispensation, but nevertheless the sexual relationships on earth have to a significant extent increased the spiritual treasures of mankind, and in the resurrection, too, these treasures will not be lost but will be preserved into eternity.

If to all this we add the consideration that the richest revelation of God which He has given us is revealed to us in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son—who became like unto us and is our prophet, priest, and king—and in the name of the Holy Spirit who is poured out in the church and who causes God Himself to dwell in us, then we feel that not the angel, but man, was created after the image of God. Angels experience His power, and wisdom, and goodness, but human beings share in His eternal mercies. God is their Lord, but He is not their Father; Christ is their Head, but He is not their Reconciler and Savior; the Holy Spirit is their Sender and Guide but He never testifies with their spirit that they are children and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Hence the eyes of the angels are cast upon the earth, for there God's richest grace has appeared, there the struggle between heaven and earth is fought out, there the church is formed into the body of the Son, and there the conclusive blow will someday be struck and the final triumph of God be achieved. Hence it is that they desire to look into the mysteries of salvation being revealed on earth and to learn to know from the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10 and 1 Peter 1:12).

Angels, accordingly, stand in numerous relationships with us, and we in many-sided relationship with them. Belief in the existence and activity of angels is not of the same worth as the belief with which we trust in God and love, fear, and honor Him with our whole heart. We may not put our trust in any creature or in any angel; we may not worship the angels or in any way give them religious honor.¹³ In fact, there is in Scripture not a single word about any guardian angel, appointed to serve each human being in particular, or about any intercession on the part of the angels in our behalf. But this does not mean that believing in angels is indifferent or worthless. On the contrary, at the time when revelation came into being, they played an important role. In the life of Christ they appeared at all turning points of His career, and they will one day be manifested with Him upon the clouds of heaven. And always they are ministering spirits sent out to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). They rejoice in the repentance of the sinner (Luke 15:10). They watch over the faithful (Ps. 34:7 and 91:11), protect the little ones (Matt. 18:10), follow the church in its career through history (Eph. 3:10), and bear the children of God into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22).

Therefore we are to think of them with respect and speak of them with honor. We are to give them joy by our repentance. We are to follow their example in the service of God and in obedience to His word. We are to show them in our own hearts and lives and in the whole of the church the manifold wisdom of God. We are to remember their fellowship and together with them declare the mighty works of God. Thus there is difference between men and angels, but there is no conflict; differentiation but also unity; distinction but also fellowship. When we arrive at Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, then we come also to the many thousands of angels and rebind the tie of unity and love

that was broken by sin (Heb. 12:22). Both they and we have our own place in the rich creation of God and achieve our peculiar function there. Angels are the sons, the mighty heroes, the powerful hosts of God. Men were created in His image and are God's *generation*. They are His *race*.

If the image of God is the distinguishing earmark of man, we owe it to ourselves to get a clear idea of the content of it.

We read in Genesis 1:26 that God created man in His image and after His likeness in order that man should have dominion over all creatures, particularly over all living creatures. Three things deserve consideration in that. In the first place, the correspondence between God and man is expressed in two words: *image* and *likeness*. These two words are not, as many have supposed, materially different, different in content, but serve to amplify and support each other. Together they serve to state that man is not an unsuccessful portrait, or a somewhat similar one, but that he is a perfect and totally corresponding image of God. Such as man is in miniature. such is God in the large, the infinitely large outline, for man is such as God is. Man stands infinitely far beneath God and is nevertheless related to Him. As creature man is absolutely dependent upon God and yet as man he is a free and independent being. Limitation and freedom, dependence and independence, immeasurable distance and intimate relation over against God, these have been combined in an incomprehensible way in the human being. How a mean creature can at the same time be the image of God—that goes far beyond our grasp.

In the second place, we are told in Genesis 1:26 that God created men (the term is plural) in His image and after His likeness. From the very beginning the intention was that God would not create one

man, but men, in his image. Therefore He immediately created man as *man and woman*, the two of them not in separation from each other but in relationship and fellowship with each other (verse 27). Not in the man alone, nor in the woman alone, but in both together, and in each in a special way, the image of God is expressed.

The contrary is sometimes affirmed on the ground that in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul says that man is the image and glory of God and that woman is the glory of man. This text is frequently abused so as to deny the image of God to the woman and to debase her far below the level of the man. But Paul is there not speaking of man and woman considered apart from each other but about their relationship in marriage. And then he says that it is the man and not the woman who is the head. And he deduces this from the fact that the man is not from the woman, but the woman from the man. The man was created first, was first made in the image of God, and to him God first revealed His glory. And if the woman shares in all this, this takes place mediately, from and through the man. She received the image of God, but after man, in dependence upon him, by way of his mediation. Hence man is the image and glory of God directly and originally; the woman is the image and glory of God in a derived way in that his is the glory of man. What we read of this matter in Genesis 2 must be added to what we read of it in Genesis 1. The way in which woman is created in Genesis 2 is the way along which she receives the image of God as well as the man (Gen. 1:27). In this is contained the further truth that the image of God rests in a number of people, with differentiation of race, talent, and powers—in short in mankind—and further that this image will achieve its full unfolding in the new humanity which is the church of Christ.

In the third place, Genesis 1:26 teaches us that God had a purpose in creating man in His image: namely, that man should have dominion

over all living creatures and that he should multiply and spread out over the world, subduing it. If now we comprehend the force of this subduing under the term culture, now generally used for it, we can say that culture in the broadest sense is the purpose for which God created man after His image. So little are *cultus* and culture, religion and civilization, Christianity and humanity in conflict with each other that it would be truer to say God's image had been granted to man so that he might in his dominion over the whole earth bring it into manifestation. And this dominion of the earth includes not only the most ancient callings of men, such as hunting and fishing, agriculture and stock-raising, but also trade and commerce, finance and credit, the exploitation of mines and mountains, and science and art. Such culture does not have its end in man, but in man who is the image of God and who stamps the imprint of his spirit upon all that he does, it returns to God, who is the First and the Last.

The content or meaning of the image of God is unfolded further in later revelation. For instance, it is remarkable that after the Fall, too, man still continued to be called the image of God.

In Genesis 5:1-3 we are reminded once more that God created man, man and woman together, in His image, and that He blessed them, and that Adam thus begot a son in his own likeness, after his image. In Genesis 9:6 the shedding of man's blood is forbidden for the reason that man was made in the image of God. The poet of the beautiful eighth psalm sings of the glory and majesty of the Lord which reveals itself in heaven and earth, and most splendidly of all in insignificant man and his dominion over all the works of God's hands. When Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, he quoted one of their poets approvingly: For we are also His offspring (Acts 17:28). In James 3:9 the Apostle by way of demonstrating the evil of

the tongue makes use of this contrast: that with it we bless God, even the Father, and with it we curse men who are made after the similitude of God. And Scripture not only calls fallen man the image of God, but it keeps on regarding and dealing with him as such throughout. It constantly looks upon man as a reasonable, moral being who is responsible to God for all his thoughts and deeds and words and is bound to His service.

Alongside of this representation, however, we find the idea that through sin man has lost the image of God. True, we are not anywhere told this directly in so many words. But it is something that can clearly be deduced from the whole teaching of Scripture concerning sinful man. After all, sin —as we shall consider more specifically later has robbed man of innocence, righteousness, and holiness, has corrupted his heart, darkened his understanding, inclined his will to evil, turned his inclinations right-about-face, and placed his body and all its members in the service of unrighteousness. Accordingly man must be changed, reborn, justified, cleansed, and sanctified. He can share in all these benefits only in the fellowship with Christ who is the Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15) and to whose image we must be conformed (Rom. 8:29). The new man, accordingly, who is put in the fellowship with Christ through faith, is created in accordance with God's will in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24) and is constantly renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Col. 3:10). The knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, which the believer obtains through the fellowship with Christ, have their origin, and example, and final purpose in God and they cause man again to share in the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

It is upon this teaching of Holy Scripture that the distinction usually made in Reformed theology between the image of God in the broader

and the narrower sense is based. If, on the one hand, after his fall and disobedience, man continues to be called the image and offspring of God, and, on the other hand, those virtues by which he especially resembles God have been lost through sin and can only be restored again in the fellowship with Christ, then these two propositions are compatible with each other only if the image of God comprises something more than the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The Reformed theologians recognized this, and over against the Lutheran and the Roman theologians they maintained it.

The Lutherans do not make the distinction between the image of God in the broader and in the narrower sense. Or, if they do make the distinction, they do not attach much importance to it nor understand its significance. For them the image of God is nothing more or less than the original righteousness, that is, the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. They recognize the image of God only in the narrower sense and do not appreciate the need of relating this image of God to the whole human nature. Thus the religio-moral life of man is held to be a special and isolated area. It is not related to, and it exercises no influence upon, the work to which man is called in state and society, and in art and science. Once the Lutheran Christian shares in the forgiveness of sins and the fellowship with God through faith, he has enough. He rests in that, and enjoys it, and does not concern himself to relate this spiritual life, backwards, to the counsel and election of God, and, forwards, to the whole earthly calling of man.

From this, in the other direction, it follows that man, when through sin he has lost the original righteousness, is bereft of the whole image of God. Nothing of it is left him, not even small remains: and so his

rational and moral nature, which is still his, is underestimated and maligned.

The Roman Catholics, on the contrary, do make a distinction between the image of God in the broader and narrower sense, although they do not usually employ these words for it. And they, too, are concerned to find a relationship between the two. But for them this relationship is external, not internal; it is artificial, not real; mechanical, not organic. The Romans present the matter as though man is conceivable without the virtues of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (the image of God in the narrower sense) and can in reality also exist thus. In that event, too, man still has some religious and moral life but only in such a kind and to such a degree as can come from natural religion and natural morality. It is a religion and morality which, as it were, remains limited to this earth, and it can never pave the way for him to heavenly blessedness and the immediate vision of God. Besides, although in the abstract it is possible that such a natural person can, without possessing the image of God in the narrower sense, fulfill the duties of natural religion and of natural moral law, still, as a matter of fact, this is very difficult inasmuch as man is a material, physical, and sensuous person. After all, desire is always characteristic of this sensuous nature of man. Such lust or desire may not in itself be sin but it certainly is a tempting occasion for sin. For, by nature, this sensuous character, being physical, is opposed to the spirit, and constitutes a threat to it always. The threat is that reason and will will be overcome by the power of the flesh.

For these two reasons, according to Roman Catholic thought, God in His sovereign favor has added the image of God in the narrower sense to the natural man. He could have created man without this image. But because He foresaw that man would then very easily fall

prey to fleshly desire, and also because He wanted to raise man to a higher state of blessedness than is possible here on earth, that is, to the heavenly glory, and to the immediate presence of Himself, therefore God added original righteousness to the natural man and so lifted him from his natural state to a higher and supernatural vantage point. Thus a two-fold purpose was achieved. In the first place, man could now, what with the help of this supernatural addition, easily control the desire which flesh is naturally heir to; and, in the second place, by fulfilling the supernatural duties prescribed for him by the original righteousness (the image of God in the narrower sense), man could now achieve a supernatural salvation corresponding to his further endowment. Thus the supernatural *addendum* of original righteousness serves two purposes for the Roman Catholic: it serves as a restraint upon the flesh, and it clears the way for merits to heaven.

The Reformed theologians take their own point of view between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran positions. According to Scripture, the image of God is larger and more inclusive than the original righteousness. For, although this original righteousness has been lost through sin, man continues to carry the name of the image and offspring of God. There remain in him some small remains of the image of God according to which he was originally created. That original righteousness could not, therefore, have been an endowment, separate and independent, and quite unrelated to human nature generally. It is not true that man at first existed, be it in thought only or in actuality also, as a purely natural being, to whom, then, original righteousness was later superadded from above. Rather, in thought and creation both, man was one with that original righteousness. The idea of man includes the idea of such righteousness. Without it man can neither be conceived of nor exist. The image of God in the narrower sense is integrally related with that

image in the broader sense. It is not accurate to say that man *bears* the image of God merely: he *is* that image of God. The image of God is identical with man, is as inclusive as the humanity of man. To the extent that, even in the state of sin, man remained man, to that extent he has preserved remnants of the image of God; and to the extent that he has lost the image of God, to that extent he has ceased to be man, true and perfect man.

After all, the image of God in the narrower sense is nothing other than the spiritual wholeness or health of man. When a human being becomes sick in body and soul, even when he becomes insane in mind, he continues to be a human being. But he has then lost something that belongs to the harmony of man, and has received something in its stead which conflicts with that harmony. Just so, when through sin man has lost the original righteousness, he continues to be man, but he has lost something that is inseparable from the idea of man and has received something instead that is alien to that idea. Hence, man, who lost the image of God, did not become something other than man: he preserved his rational and moral nature. The thing that he lost was not something which really did not belong to his nature in the first place and what he received instead was something that seized upon and corrupted his whole nature. Just as the original righteousness was man's spiritual wholeness and health, so sin is his spiritual disease. Sin is moral corruption, spiritual death, death in sins and transgressions, as Scripture describes it.

Such a conception of the image of God permits the whole teaching of Holy Scripture to come into its own. It is a conception which at one and the same time maintains the relationship and the distinction between nature and grace, creation and redemption. Gratefully and eloquently this conception acknowledges the grace of God which,

after the fall, too, permitted man to remain man and continued to regard him and deal with him as a rational, moral, and responsible being. And at the same time, it holds that man, bereft of the image of God, is wholly corrupted and inclined to all evil. Life and history are available to confirm this. For even in its lowest, deepest fall, human nature yet remained human nature. And, no matter what acme of achievement man may accomplish, he remains small and weak, guilty and impure. Only the image of God constitutes man true and perfect man.

If, now, we try briefly to survey the content of the image of God, the first thing that comes up for attention is man's spiritual nature. He is a physical, but he is also a spiritual being. He has a soul which, in essence, is a spirit. This is evident from what the Holy Scripture teaches concerning the origin, essence, and duration of the human soul. As to that origin, we read concerning Adam that he, unlike the animals, received a breath of life from above (Gen. 2:7) and in a sense this holds for all men. For it is God who gives every man his spirit (Eccles. 12:7), who forms the spirit of man within him (Zechariah 12:1), and who, therefore, in distinction from the fathers of the flesh, can be called the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9). This special origin of the human soul determines its essence also. True, Scripture several times ascribes a soul to animals (Genesis 2:19 and 9:4, and elsewhere) but in these instances the reference, as some translations also have it, is to a principle of life in the general sense. Man has a different and a higher soul, a soul which in very essence is spiritual in kind. This is evident from the fact that Scripture does ascribe a peculiar spirit to man but never to the animal. Animals do have a spirit in the sense that as creatures they are created and sustained by the Spirit of God (Ps. 104:30) but they do not, each of them, have their own, independent spirit. Man has. [14](#) Because of its

spiritual nature the soul of man is immortal; it does not as in the animals die when the body dies, but it returns to God who has given the spirit (Eccles. 12:7). It cannot, like the body, be killed by men (Matt. 10:28). As spirit it continues to exist (Heb. 12:9 and 1 Peter 3:19).

This spirituality of the soul raises man above the plane of the animal, and gives him a point of resemblance with the angels. True, he belongs to the sensuous world, being earthly of the earth, but by virtue of his spirit he far transcends the earth, and he walks with royal freedom in the realm of spirits. By his spiritual nature man is related to God who is Spirit (John 4:24) and who dwells in eternity (Isa. 57:15).

In the second place, the image of God is revealed in the abilities and powers with which the spirit of man has been endowed. It is true that the higher animals can by sensation form images and relate these to each other, but they can do no more. Man, on the contrary, raises himself above the level of images and enters the realm of concepts and ideas. By means of thought, which cannot be understood as a movement of the brain but must be regarded as a spiritual activity, man deduces the general from the particular, rises from the level of the visible to that of the invisible things, forms ideas of the true, the good, and the beautiful, and he learns to know God's eternal power and Godhead from God's creatures. By means of his willing, which must also be distinguished from his sinful desire, he emancipates himself from the material world and reaches out for invisible and suprasensuous realities. His emotions even are by no means set in motion merely by useful and pleasurable things inside the material world but are roused and stimulated also by ideal, spiritual goods which are quite unsusceptible to arithmetical calculation. All of these abilities and activities have their point of departure and their center

in the self-consciousness by which man knows himself and by means of which man bears within himself an ineradicable sense of his own existence and of the peculiarity of his rational and moral nature. Besides, all these particular abilities express themselves outwardly in language and religion, in morality and law, in science and art,—all of them, of course, as well as many others, peculiar to man and not to be found in the animal world at all.

All these abilities and activities are characteristics of the image of God. For God, according to the revelation of nature and Scripture, is not an unconscious, blind force, but a personal, self-conscious, knowing, and willing being. Even emotions, dispositions, and passions such as wrath, jealousy, compassion, mercy, love, and the like, are without hesitancy ascribed to God in the Scriptures, not so much as emotions which He Himself passively undergoes, but as activities of His almighty, holy, and loving being. Scripture could not speak in this human way about God if in all his abilities and activities, man were not created in the image of God.

The same holds true, in the third place, of the body of man. Even the body is not excluded from the image of God. True, Scripture expressly says that God is Spirit (John 4:24), and it nowhere ascribes a body to Him. Nevertheless, God is the creator also of the body and of the whole sensuous world. All things, material things too, have their origin and their existence in the Word that was with God (John 1:3 and Col. 1:15), and therefore rest in thought, in spirit. Moreover, the body, although it is not the cause of all those activities of the spirit, is the instrument of them. It is not the ear which hears but the spirit of man which hears through the ear.

Hence all those activities which we accomplish by means of the body, and even the physical organs by which we accomplish them, can be

ascribed to God. Scripture speaks of His hands and feet, of His eyes and ears, and of so much more, in order to indicate that all that man can achieve by way of the body is, in an original and perfect way, due to God. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? (Psalm 94:9). To the extent, therefore, that the body serves as tool and instrument of the spirit, it exhibits a certain resemblance to, and gives us some notion of, the way in which God is busy in the world.

All this belongs to the image of God in the broader sense. But the likeness of God and man comes out much more strongly in the original righteousness with which the first man was endowed and which is called the image of God in the narrower sense. When Scripture puts the emphasis on this original righteousness, it thereby declares that what matters most in the image of God is not that it exists but what it is. The main thing is not *that* we think and hate and love and will. The likeness of man and God gets its significance from *what* we think and will, from *what* the object of our hatred and love is. The powers of reason and will, of inclination and aversion, were given to man precisely for this purpose that he should use them in the right way—that is, according to God's will and to His glory. The devils, too, have retained the powers of thought and will, but they put these solely into the service of their hatred and enmity against God. Even the belief in God's existence, which in itself is a good thing, gives the devils nothing but trembling, and the fear of His judgment (James 2:19). Concerning the Jews, who called themselves children of Abraham and named God their Father, Jesus once said that, if this were so, they would do the works of Abraham and would love Him whom God had sent. But because they were doing precisely the opposite and sought to kill Jesus, they betrayed that they were really of the father the devil and wanted to do his will (John 8:39-44). The

desires which the Jews fostered, and the works which they did, constituted them despite all their keen discrimination and energy like unto the devil. And so, too, the human likeness to God comes out not chiefly in the fact that man possesses reason and understanding, heart and will. It expresses itself principally in pure knowledge and perfect righteousness and holiness, which together constitute the image

of God in the narrower sense, and with which man was privileged and adorned at his creation.

The knowledge which was given to the first man did not consist of the fact that he knew everything and had nothing further to learn about God, himself, and the world. Even the knowledge of the angels and of the saints is susceptible to growth. So was the knowledge of Christ on earth up to the end of His life. That original knowledge of the first man implies rather that Adam received an adequate knowledge for his circumstance and calling and that this knowledge was pure knowledge. He loved truth with his whole soul. The lie, with all of its calamitous consequences of error, doubt, unbelief, and uncertainty, had not yet found a place in his heart. He stood in the truth, and he saw and appreciated everything as it really was.

The fruit of such knowledge of the truth was righteousness and holiness. Holiness means that the first man was created free of all taint of sin. His nature was unspoiled. No evil thought, deliberation, or desire came up out of his heart. He was not innocent or simple, but he knew God, and he knew the law of God that was written in his heart, and he loved that law with his whole soul. Because he stood in the truth, he stood also in love. Righteousness means that the man who thus knew the truth in his mind, and who was holy in his will and in all his desires, thereby also corresponded wholly to God's law,

wholly satisfied the demands of His justice, and stood before His face without any guilt. Truth and love bring peace in their wake, peace with God, and ourselves, and the whole world. The man who himself stands in the right place, the place where he belongs, also stands in the right relationship to God and to all creatures.

Of this state and circumstance in which the first man was created we can no longer form an idea. A head and a heart, a mind and a will, all of them altogether pure and without sin—that is something which lies far beyond the pale of all our experiences. When we stop to reflect how sin has insinuated itself into all our thinking and speaking, into all our choices and actions, then even the doubt can rise in our hearts whether such a state of truth, love, and peace is possible for man. Holy Scripture, however, wins the victory and conquers every doubt. In the first place, it shows us, not only at the beginning but also in the middle of history, the figure of a man who could with full justice put the question to his opponents: Which of you convinceth me of sin? (John 8:46). Christ was very man and therefore also perfect man. He did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). In the second place, Scripture teaches that the first human couple were created after God's image in righteousness and holiness as the fruit of known truth. Thus the Scriptures maintain that sin does not belong to the essence of human nature, and that it can therefore also be removed and separated from that human nature.

If sin cleaves to man from his earliest origin, and by virtue of the nature which is his, then from the nature of the case there is no redemption from sin possible. The redemption from sin would then be tantamount to the annihilation of human nature. But now, as it is, not only can a human being exist without sin in the abstract, but such a holy human being has actually existed. And when he fell, and

became guilty and polluted, another man, the second Adam, rose up without sin, to set fallen man free from his guilt and to cleanse him of all pollution. The creation of man according to the image of God and the possibility of his fall include the possibility of his redemption and recreation. But whoever denies the first cannot affirm the second; the denial of the fall has as its other side the comfortless preaching of human irredeemability. In order to be able to fall, man must first have stood. In order to lose the image of God he must first possess it.

The creation of man according to the image of God—we read in Genesis 1:26 and 28—had as its nearest purpose that man should fill, subdue, and have dominion over the earth. Such dominion is not a constituent element of the image of God. Nor does it, as some have maintained, constitute the whole content of that image. Moreover, it absolutely is not an arbitrary and incidental addendum. On the contrary, the emphasis that is placed upon this dominion and its close relationship with the creation according to the image of God indicate conclusively that the image comes to expression in the dominion and by means of it must more and more explain and unfold itself. Further, in the description of this dominion, it is plainly stated that to a certain extent it was, indeed, immediately given to man as an endowment, but that to a very great extent it would be achieved only in the future. After all, God does not say merely that He will make "men" in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), but when He has made the first human couple, man and woman, He blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Gen. 1:28), and He further gave Adam the particular task of dressing and keeping the garden (Gen. 2:15).

All this teaches very plainly that man was not created for idleness but for work. He was not allowed to rest upon his laurels, but had to go straight into the wide world in order to subdue it to the power of his word and will. He was given a big, a widely distributed, a rich task on the earth. He was given an assignment which would cost him centuries of effort to accomplish. He was pointed in a direction incalculably far away which he had to take and which he had to pursue to the end. In short, there is a big difference and a wide separation between the *condition* in which the first man was created and the *destination* to which he was called. True, this destination is closely related to his nature, just as that nature is closely related to his origin, but there is distinction all the same. The nature of man, the essence of his being—the image of God according to which he was created—had to come to a constantly richer and fuller unfolding of its content by means of its striving towards its destination. The image of God, so to speak, had to be spread to the ends of the earth and had to be impressed on all the works of men's hands. Man had to cultivate the earth so that it would more and more become a revelation of God's attributes.

The dominion of the earth was therefore the nearest but not the sole purpose to which man was called. The nature of the case points to that fact. Work which is really work cannot have its end and final purpose in itself but always has as its further objective to bring something into being. It ceases when that objective has been reached. To work, simply to work, without deliberation, plan, or purpose, is to work hopelessly and is unworthy of rational man. A development which continues indefinitely is not a development. Development implies intention, course of action, final purpose, destination. If, then, man at his creation was called to work, that implies that he himself and the people who should issue from him should enter into a rest after the work.

The institution of the seven-day week comes to confirm and reinforce this conviction. In his work of creating God rested on the seventh day from all His work. Man, made in the image of God, immediately at the time of the creation gets the right and the privilege to follow in the Divine example in this respect also. The work which is laid upon him, namely, the replenishing and subduing of the earth, is a weak imitation of the creative activity of God. Man's work, too, is a work which is entered upon after deliberation, which follows a definite course of action, and which is aimed at a specific objective. Man is not a machine which unconsciously moves on; he does not turn about in a treadmill with an unchangeable monotony. In his work too man is man, the image of God, a thinking, willing, acting being who seeks to create something, and who in the end looks back upon the work of his hands with approbation. As it does for God Himself, man's work ends in resting, enjoyment, pleasure. The six-day week crowned by the Sabbath dignifies man's work, raises him above the monotonous movement of spiritless nature, and presses the stamp of a Divine calling upon it. Whoever, therefore, on the Sabbath day enters into the rest of God in accordance with His purpose, that person rests from his works in the same glad way as God rests from His (Heb. 4:10). This holds true of the individual and it also holds true of the church and of mankind generally. The world, too, has its world's work to perform, a work which is followed and concluded by a Sabbath. There remains a rest for the people of God. Each Sabbath Day is but an example and foretaste of it and at the same time also a prophecy and a guarantee of that rest (Heb. 4:9).

That is why the Heidelberg Catechism rightly says that God created man good and according to His own image *in order that* he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him. The final purpose of man lay in the eternal blessedness, in the glorification of God in

heaven and on earth. But in order to arrive at this end man first had to fulfill his task on earth. In order to enter into the rest of God he first had to finish God's work. The way to heaven goes through the earth and over the earth. The entrance to the Sabbath is opened by the six days of work. One comes to eternal life by way of work.

This teaching of the purpose of man so far rests entirely upon thoughts which are expressed in Genesis 1:26-3:3. But the rest of the second chapter has another important constituent element to add to it. When God places man in paradise, He gives him the right to eat freely of all the trees in the garden except one. That one He singles out as an exception, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Man is told that he may not eat of that tree, and that on the day he eats of it he will die the death (Gen. 2:16-17). To all that is *commanded* is now added one thing that is *forbidden*. The commandments were known to Adam partly from a reading of his own heart, partly from God's spoken word. Adam did not invent them. God created them in him and communicated them to him. Man is not religiously and morally autonomous. He is not his own lawgiver, and he may not do as he pleases. Rather, God is his only Lawgiver and Judge (Isa. 33:22). All those commandments which Adam received now resolved themselves into this one requirement that he who was created as the image of God should in all his thinking and doing, and throughout his life and work, remain the image of God. Man had to remain such personally in his own life, but also in his marriage relationship, in his family, in his six-day working week, in his rest on the seventh day, in his replenishing and multiplying, in his subduing and having dominion over the earth, and in his dressing and keeping of the garden. Adam was not to go his own way but had to walk in the way that God appointed for him.

But all those commandments, which, so to speak, gave Adam ample freedom of movement and the whole earth as his field of operation are augmented, or, better, are limited, by one proscription. This proscription, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, does not belong to the image of God, is not a constituent element of it, but, quite to the contrary, fixes its boundary. If Adam transgresses this proscriptive command, he loses the image of God, places himself outside the fellowship of God, and dies the death. By this command therefore the obedience of man is tested. This command will prove whether man will follow God's way or his own way, whether he will keep to the right path or go astray, whether he will remain a son of God in the house of the Father or want to take the portion of goods that is given him and go to a distant country. Hence, too, this proscriptive command is usually given the name of the probationary command. Hence, too, it has in a certain sense an arbitrary content. Adam and Eve could find no reason why just now the eating of this one particular tree was forbidden. In other words, they had to keep the command not because they fathomed it in its reasonable content and understood it, but solely because God had said it, on the basis of His authority, prompted by sheer obedience, out of a pure regard to their duty. That is why, further, the tree whose fruit they might not eat was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the tree which would demonstrate whether man should arbitrarily and self-sufficiently want to determine what was good and what evil, or whether he would in this matter permit himself to be wholly led by the command which God had given concerning it and keep to that.

The first man, therefore, was given something, indeed, was given much to *do*; he was also given something, though this was little, which he was *not* to do. Generally the last requirement is the more difficult of the two. There are quantities of people who are willing to do incredibly much for the sake, say, of their health, but who are

willing to *give up* nothing for it, or at least very little. They regard the slightest self-denial as an unbearable burden. That which is forbidden gives off a kind of mysterious lure. It raises questions about why and what and how. It prompts doubt and excites the imagination. This temptation which emanated from the proscriptive command the first man had to resist. This was the struggle of faith which was given him to fight. But, in the image of God according to which he was created, he also received the strength by which he could have remained standing and have conquered.

Nevertheless it becomes apparent from the probationary command even more clearly than from the institution of the seven-day week that the end or destiny of man is to be distinguished from his creation. Adam was not yet at the beginning what he could be and had to become at the end. He lived in paradise, but not yet in heaven. He still had a long way to go before he arrived at his proper destination. He had to achieve eternal life by his "commission" and "omission." In short, there is a big difference between the state of innocence in which the first man was created, and the state of glory for which he was destined. The nature of this difference is further illuminated for us by the rest of revelation.

Adam was dependent upon the change of night and day, waking and sleeping, but we read of the heavenly Jerusalem that there shall be no night there (Rev. 21:25 and 22:5) and that the redeemed by the blood of the Lamb stand before the throne of God and serve Him night and day in His temple (Rev. 7:15). The first man was bound to the apportionment of the week into six work days and one day of rest, but for the people of God there remains hereafter an eternal, unintermittent rest (Heb. 4:9 and Rev. 14:13). In the state of innocence man daily required food and drink, but in the future God shall destroy both the belly and meats (1 Cor. 6:13). The first human

couple consisted of man and woman and was accompanied by the blessing: be fruitful and multiply. But in the resurrection men do not marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Matt. 22:30). The first man, Adam, was of the earth, earthy, had a natural body and so became a living soul, but the believers in the resurrection receive a spiritual body and will then bear the image of heavenly man, the image of Christ the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:45-49). Adam was created in such a way that he could stray, could sin, could fall and die; but the believers even on earth are in principle raised above this possibility. They can no longer sin, for whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:9). They cannot fall even to the very end for they are kept through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5). And they cannot die, for those who believe in Christ have, already here on earth, the eternal incorruptible life; they shall not die in all eternity, and though they were dead they should yet live (John 11:25-26).

In looking at the first man, therefore, we must be on guard against two extremes. On the one hand, we must, on the basis of Holy Scripture, maintain that he was immediately created in the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness: he was not at first a small, innocent child that had to develop into maturity; he was not a being who, mature in body, was spiritually without any content, taking a neutral position between truth and falsehood, good and evil; and still less was he originally an animal being, gradually evolved out of animal existence, who now at long last by virtue of struggle and effort had become man.

Such a representation is in irreconcilable conflict with the representation of Scripture and with sound reason.

Still, on the other hand, the state of the first man should not be exaggeratedly glorified as is so often done in Christian doctrine and preaching. No matter how high God placed man above the animal level, man had not yet achieved his highest possible level. He was able-not-to-sin, but not yet not-able-to-sin. He did not yet possess eternal life which cannot be corrupted and cannot die, but received instead a preliminary immortality whose existence and duration depended upon the fulfillment of a condition. He was immediately created as image of God, but he could still lose this image and all its glory. He lived in paradise, it is true, but this paradise was not heaven and it could with all of its beauty be forfeited by him. One thing was lacking in all the riches, both spiritual and physical, which Adam possessed: *absolute certainty*. As long as we do not have that, our rest and our pleasure is not yet perfect; in fact, the contemporary world with its many efforts to insure everything that man possesses is satisfactory evidence for this. The believers are insured for this life and the next, for Christ is their Guarantor and will not allow any of them to be plucked out of His hand and be lost (John 10:28). Perfect love banishes fear in them (1 John 4:18) and persuades them that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord (Rom. 8:38-39). But this absolute certainty was lacking to man in paradise; he was not, together with his creation in the image of God, permanently established in the good. Irrespective of how much he had, he could lose it all, both for himself and for his posterity. His origin was Divine; his nature was related to the Divine nature; his destiny was eternal blessedness in the immediate presence of God. But whether he was to reach that appointed destination was made dependent upon his own choice and upon his own will.

Endnotes:

1. Gen. 2:19; 9 :4, 10, 12, 16; Lev. 11:10; 17:11; and elsewhere.
2. Lev. 19:31; 20:27; and Deut. 18:10-14.
3. Deut. 18:10; Jer. 27:10; and Rev. 21:8.
4. Lev. 19:26; Isa. 47:13; and Micah 5:11.
5. Deut. 18:11.
6. Lev. 19:26 and Dent. 18:10.
7. Deut. 18:11 and Isa. 47:9.
8. Matt. 18:10 and 24:36.
9. Ps. 103:20 and Col. 1:16.
10. Gen. 18:2; Judges 18:3; and Rev. 19:14.
11. Deut. 33:2; Dan. 7:10; and Rev. 5:11.
12. Dan. 8:16; 9:21; 10:13, 21; and Luke 1:19, 26.
13. Deut, 6:13; Matt, 4:10; and Rev. 2:9.
14. Deut. 2:30; Judges 15:19; Ezek. 3:14; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 2:11 and 5:3-4.

The History and Development of the Doctrine of Predestiantion

Herman Bavinck

The Development of the Doctrine of Predestination among the Reformed (continued): the Controversy in regard to Infra- and Supralapsarianism:

(1) This controversy is rooted in the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius. According to Pelagianism both original and actual

sin (unbelief) logically precede election and reprobation; according to Augustine ONLY original sin precedes predestination. According to supra, predestination logically precedes not only actual but also original sin. Hence, Pelagianism: original sin, actual sin, predestination; Augustinianism or infralapsarianism: original sin, predestination, actual sin; supralapsarianism: predestination, original sin, actual sin.

(2) Many followers of Augustine accepted the doctrine of two-fold predestination: a predestination unto glory and a predestination unto death.

(3) The three Reformers: Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, arrived at the supralapsarian view: election and reprobation are deeds of God's sovereignty, logically preceding God's decree concerning the fall. Nevertheless, Calvin often follows the infralapsarian reasoning.

(4) For the order of the elements of the decree see III C.

(5) The Synod of Dort expressed itself in an infralapsarian manner but did not in any sense condemn supralapsarianism. It rejected Arminianism.

Among the Reformed another controversy soon arose, namely, in regard to supra- and infralapsarianism. This controversy is rooted in the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius. With the Pelagians the order in the elements of God's counsel was as follows:

1. A decree to create man.
2. A decree to send Christ in order to redeem fallen humanity, to cause him to die for all and to be proclaimed to all, and to grant

to all “grace sufficient” unto salvation.

3. A decree determining the eternal salvation of some on the ground of foreseen faith, and the eternal punishment of others on the ground of foreseen unbelief.

A totally different order was presented by Augustine. At times he makes reprobation a part of predestination, but even then he views foreknowledge not as something negative and passive but as a divine activity. For, God's will is the “necessary ground of things”; what happens “contrary to his will does not defeat his will”; when God “permits” something, this permission is positive, efficacious. “Surely, he permits willingly, not unwillingly.” The supralapsarian position, viz., that reprobation is an act of God's sovereignty, is already implied in this view. Usually, however, Augustine uses the words *divine foreknowledge* and *permission* when he speaks about the fall. Augustine has the following order:

1. A decree to create man and to permit him to fall.
2. A decree to elect some out of this corrupt mass unto eternal life, and to allow others to remain in the perdition wherein they have involved themselves. Accordingly, both election and reprobation presuppose a fallen humanity, a “corrupt mass.” From this it appears that Augustine usually favors the infralapsarian representation; in his reasoning he does not go back beyond the fall; he views reprobation as an act of God's justice. “God is good, God is just. Because he is good, he is able to deliver some that are undeserving of salvation; because he is just, he is not able to condemn any one who is undeserving of condemnation.”

Now, although Augustine does not view the decree of predestination as preceding both original and actual sin (the supra position), neither does he place the decree of election and reprobation after both of

these (the Pelagian position). According to Augustine, *only* original sin logically precedes predestination. Moreover, he considers original sin to be a sufficient ground for reprobation. Actual sins are not taken into account in the decree of reprobation although they are considered in connection with the determination of the degree of punishment. Augustine derived this order in the elements of God's counsel from Rom. 9:11, 12 (“... for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’ Even as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.’”) and from the fate of children dying in infancy unbaptized. Nevertheless, although original sin is a sufficient ground for reprobation, Augustine does not view it as the final and deepest ground. According to him God's sovereignty, as expressed in Rom. 9:18, (“So then, he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth”) is the only answer to the question why God rejected some and chose others, particularly, why this person was rejected and that one elected.

3. Finally, a decree determining the means whereby the end in view will be realized.

Augustine does not directly deduce a decree establishing the means unto perdition from the decree of reprobation as such. He does teach that even in regard to sin God proceeds in an active and positive manner; God is the “Disposer of sins,” he deemed it right that there should be sin, he punishes sin with sin; but Augustine generally views reprobation negatively, i.e., as preterition or dereliction (passing by or abandonment), and he does not as a rule view it as part of predestination, but identifies the latter with election, and subsumes both election and reprobation under God's providence. On the other hand there is a predestination of the means unto

salvation. With Augustine predestination or election is always a predestination unto glory. It implies foreordination unto grace. Accordingly, foreseen faith and good works are not the ground of election, neither is Christ the final ground. But election is foreordination unto the desired goal, hence, unto the means whereby this goal will be realized, i. e., unto Christ who was himself predestinated, and thus unto calling, baptism, faith, and the gift of perseverance; predestination is a preparation for grace. Accordingly, the elect, by way of grace in Christ, will surely obtain heavenly salvation. Therefore, in later years many followers of Augustine arrived at the doctrine of twofold predestination: a “predestination unto death” began to be coordinated with a “predestination unto glory.” Nevertheless, the former could not be construed in the same sense as the latter; hence, a distinction was made between a negative and a positive reprobation. The negative reprobation logically precedes the fall; it is an act of God's sovereignty; it does not depend upon foreseen demerits any more than election depends upon foreseen merits; it implies “the decree to permit certain individuals to fall into a state of guilt” and it is “the cause of dereliction.” Thus many Thomists, Alvarez, the Salmanticenses, Estius, Sylvius. etc., taught that negative reprobation precedes the fall and that it is purely an act of God's sovereignty and good pleasure. Nevertheless, this supralapsarian reprobation was viewed as wholly negative, i.e., as God's purpose not to elect certain individuals, to permit them to fall, and afterward to ordain them to everlasting punishment (positive reprobation). *Essentially*, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and all supralapsarian Reformed theologians never went beyond this point. They neither taught a “predestination unto sins” nor did they represent God as the author of sin, as is falsely charged by Roman Catholics, who advance this accusation against the Predestinationists of the fifth century, Gottschalk, Bradwardina, Wyclif, and especially against the Reformers. They do this merely in order to justify their

own Semi-Pelagian view, and to harmonize it with the teachings of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Essentially the teaching of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in regard to predestination was accepted by the Reformers: the modifications introduced by them were slight and unessential, if we except the doctrine of assurance. The Reformers agreed with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on many points; viz., they, too, believed that election is not conditioned upon foreseen merits, but that it is the source of faith and good works; that predestination unto glory always implies predestination unto grace; that negative reprobation is not to be explained as an act of God's justice but as an act of his sovereignty, and that it logically precedes sin; that this negative reprobation is followed by a decree to permit sin and to allow some to remain in their fallen state and that positive reprobation takes sin into account. To all this they added, however, that the concepts *foreknowledge* and *permission*, though not wrong in themselves, cannot and should not be interpreted in a merely passive sense; that even if they could be so construed, they would offer no real solution of the problem; and that the distinction between positive and negative reprobation has very little value. Thus, all three Reformers arrived at the so-called supralapsarian view of the doctrine of predestination, according to which both election and reprobation are to be viewed as acts of God's sovereignty, logically preceding God's decree concerning the fall, sin, and redemption through Christ. But it is especially Calvin who often purposely refuses to go beyond the secondary causes of salvation and perdition, and therefore often reasons in an infralapsarian manner. Let not the reprobate view God's decree as the cause of his perdition, but let him rather look upon his own corrupt nature with respect to which he himself is guilty. The elect and the reprobate were equally guilty but God is merciful toward the former, just toward the latter. In Romans 9:21

the “clay” indicates men in their fallen condition, of whom God elects some while he leaves others “in their own ruin, to which by nature all are exposed.” The fall in Adam is the nearest cause of reprobation. God hates only sin in us. And of this representation: “that out of the race doomed in Adam God elected those whom he was pleased to elect, and reprobated those whom he willed to reprobate.” Calvin says, “just as it is a great deal more suitable unto the cultivation of faith, so it is discussed with greater profit. . . is not only more conducive unto piety, but, it seems to me, more theological, more suitable to practical Christianity, and also more conducive unto edification.” Nevertheless, this does not fully satisfy Calvin. Sin may be the proximate cause of perdition, it is, nevertheless, not the deepest cause. For the theory that God apart from any previous plan decided to create man, then sat down, as it were, in a watchtower to see what man would do, and having seen and foreseen this, only afterward proceeded to the act of election and reprobation, is altogether untenable. Foreknowledge and permission do not solve the problem. because God, foreseeing the fall, could have prevented it; accordingly, he voluntarily permitted the fall because it seemed good to him. Accordingly, the fall of Adam, sin in general, and all evil, were not only foreseen by God but in a certain sense were willed and determined by him. Accordingly, there must have been a reason, unknown to us, why God willed the fall: there is “a deeper divine decree” logically preceding the fall. Hence, when Pighius answers Calvin by objecting that according to the latter's view there would have been in the divine mind a “distinction between elect and reprobate previous to the fall of man,” Calvin indeed answers that Pighius fails to distinguish between “proximate and remote causes,” that every reprobate must consider his own sin to be the direct cause of his perdition, and that the opposite view is handicapped with the same objections, he does not deny the validity of the conclusion drawn by Pighius: there is a “secret divine decree” anteceding the

fall, The final and deepest cause of reprobation as well as of election is the will of God. Hence, with Calvin the supralapsarian and infralapsarian representation alternates. This is also true of most of the later theologians who embraced supralapsarianism. They regard the supralapsarian view to be admissible they do not think of condemning infralapsarianism or of demanding that their view be embodied in the official confession of the church as the only standard of truth. They do not ask that their own view be *substituted* for the infralapsarian representation but they plead for *actual recognition* of both views.

According to the supralapsarian view a divine knowledge of all possibilities precedes every decree, a “knowledge of simple intelligence.” According to the rule “what is ultimate in execution is first in design,” supra teaches the following order in the elements of God's counsel:

1. A decree determining the purpose for which God would create and govern all things, namely. the revelation of his virtues, esp. of his mercy and of his justice; respectively, in the eternal salvation of a definite number of men conceived as yet only as possibles, “creatable and fallible.” and in the eternal punishment of another definite number. The manifestation of these virtues necessitated:
2. A second decree determining the existence of human beings who would be so wretched and pitiable that they would be fit objects of God's mercy and justice. The actual existence of such human beings necessitated:
3. A third decree to create a man adorned with the image of God to be the head of humanity, and “by an efficacious permission” to allow him to fall so that he would involve his entire posterity in that fall.

4. Finally, a decree to manifest God's mercy in the elect by providing a Mediator for them and by granting them the gifts of faith and perseverance, and to show God's justice in the reprobate by withholding saving grace from them and by giving them up unto sin.

In this order of the decrees election and reprobation precede not only faith and unbelief, regeneration and hardening, but also creation and the fall. However, one difficulty presents itself immediately: it was the established Reformed doctrine that the election of Christ and of the church are not to be separated and that both are included in one single decree that has as its object "the mystic Christ." But in the supralapsarian scheme the election of the church is separated from the election of Christ by the two decrees of creation and the fall. Comrie, however, tried to overcome this objection by teaching that before the decree of creation and the fall the believers are chosen unto union with Christ. This union is so close and unbreakable that when those chosen fall, as is determined in a subsequent decree, Christ, who had been elected as Head, is now also chosen to be the Mediator of redemption. From this it is clear that Comrie understood that the election of the church as the body of Christ cannot be separated from the election of Christ as the Head of the Church. Accordingly, he placed the election of both before the decree of creation and the fall. However, in this manner not only men considered as mere possibilities but also a merely possible Christ was made the object of the decree of election.

The churches, however, always objected to this supralapsarian view. As a result, there is not a single Reformed confession that offers this representation. At the Synod of Dort there were a few adherents of this view, esp. Gomarus and Maccovius; moreover, the delegates of South Holland, Overisel, and Friesland preferred to leave the

question undecided and to use an expression that would satisfy both parties. But although the “opinions” of the Dutch and of the foreign delegates, also of those from Geneva, were definitely Reformed in character, nevertheless, they were without exception infralapsarian and clothed in mild and moderate terms. And the Synod at length defined election as “the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their *own* fault from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to salvation in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.” Nevertheless, the Synod purposely refused to condemn supralapsarianism; for, various theologians, among whom were Calvin, Beza, Piscator, Perkins, Hommins, Bogerman, etc., had at times used strong expression; e.g., “that some men are created in order that they may be damned; that men viewed as innocent are reprobated or damned; that God hates men irrespective of sin; that men were predestinated unto sin; that God has need of man as a sinner; that God willed and brought about the fact that men sinned; that God acted insincerely in the calling of certain persons,” etc. At the conference held in the Hague the Remonstrants had made ready use of these expressions and of the difference between infra- and supralapsarianism; consequently, the members of the synod were intent on avoiding such “phrases that were too harsh.” But when the delegates from England, Bremen, and Hesse insisted that these expressions be condemned, the Synod refused to grant this request. In defence of this refusal Synod stated that Scripture also uses very strong expressions at times, that such phrases may have a much milder meaning when examined in their context than they appear to have when considered apart from their context, and that the responsibility for them rests with the respective authors. In

addition, Synod admonished against the use of immoderate phrases without mentioning any specifically and against “many other things of the same kind,” and at a later session administered a severe rebuke to Maccovius because of the manner in which he had conducted himself. Accordingly, although the supralapsarian view was not embodied in the confession, neither was it condemned. The Westminster Assembly purposely refrained from attempting to decide this question and from siding with either the infra- or the supralapsarian party. For that reason many continued to favor supralapsarianism although the rights of infralapsarianism were at the same time recognized inasmuch as the latter view had been embodied in the confession of the churches, was zealously and ably defended by many theologians, and was usually placed in the foreground in the preaching of the Gospel.

Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism

by Herman Bavinck

C. The supralapsarian and infralapsarian interpretation of the decree:

(1) Points of agreement. Both agree:

- (a) That God is not the Author of sin (supra as well as infra).
- (b) That Scripture (not philosophy) is the only source of our knowledge of God's decree (supra as well as infra).
- (c) That man's fall and punishment is not merely the object

of God's foreknowledge but of his decree and foreordination (infra as well as supra).

(d) That faith is not the cause of the decree of election, neither sin the cause of the decree of reprobation (infra as well as supra).

(2) Points of disagreement:

(a) In general, supralapsarianism places the decree of predestination proper above (supra) the decree to permit the fall (lapsus); while infralapsarianism places the decree of predestination proper below (infra) the decree to permit the fall (lapsus). Hence:

Supralapsarianism:

predestination
fall

Infralapsarianism:

fall
predestination

(b) From this general differentiation it becomes clear that supra and infra differ in regard to their presentation of the order in the elements of God's plan. The logical order according to supra:

1. a decree determining the purpose of all things, namely, the revelation of God's virtues; specifically, the revelation of his mercy in the salvation of a definite number of possible men; and the revelation of his justice in the perdition of another definite number of

possible men

2. a decree to create the men thus elected and reprobated.

3. a decree to permit them to fall.

4. a decree to provide a Mediator for the elect and through him to justify them, and to condemn the reprobate.

The logical order according to infra:

1. a decree to create man in holiness and blessedness.

2. a decree to permit man to fall.

3. a decree to elect some out of this fallen multitude and to leave others in their misery.

4. a decree to bring about the salvation of the elect through Christ. See II, F.

(c) From this again it is apparent that according to supra men viewed as possible or creatable and fallible are the objects of the decree; while, according to infra men viewed as fallen are objects of the decree.

(3) Objections:

(a) To infra:

1. God's justice does not explain the decree of reprobation. The ultimate ground of reprobation is God's sovereign will.

2. In order to maintain reprobation as an act of God's JUSTICE infra places reprobation after the FALL as if in the decree of reprobation God figured only with ORIGINAL sin and not also with ACTUAL sins.

(b) To supra:

1. Supra is correct when it maintains that God's glory is the final goal of all God's works, but the manner in which that goal will be realized is not thereby given; it is incorrect to say that in the eternal perdition of the reprobate God reveals his justice only and that in the eternal salvation of the elect he reveals his mercy exclusively.
2. According to supra the decree of predestination has for its object possible men and a possible Redeemer; but just how are we to conceive of a decree concerning possible men whose actual future existence has not even been determined?
3. Supra makes the damnation of the reprobate the object of the divine will IN THE SAME SENSE as the salvation of the elect. This position is not sustained by Scripture.

(c) To both infra and supra:

1. It is incorrect to define the final goal of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect and of his justice in the reprobate.
2. It is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination.
3. Predestination unto eternal death should not be coordinated with predestination unto eternal life, for while certain Individuals constitute the object of reprobation, the human race under a new Head, even Christ, is the object of election.
4. Both supra and infra err when they regard the various elements of God's counsel as subordinately

related to each other.

5. Both are one-sided: supra emphasizing God's sovereignty; Infra, God's righteousness, holiness, and mercy.

(4) The author's conclusion in regard to the whole matter: "God's decree should not be exclusively described . . . as a straight line to indicate a relation merely of before and after, cause and effect, means and goal; but it should also be viewed as a system the several elements of which are coordinately related to one another. . . . As in an organism all the members are dependent upon one another and in a reciprocal manner determine one another, so also the universe is God's work of art, the several parts of which are organically related."

The word "predestination," has been used in more than one sense: it has been given a broad and a narrow meaning. According to Pelagianism it is merely the decree whereby God, on the ground of foreseen faith and perseverance on the part of some, and foreseen sin and unbelief on the part of others, has determined to give to the former eternal salvation and to the latter eternal punishment. According to this conception, creation, the fall, Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel and the offering of grace to all, persevering faith and unbelief precede predestination and are not included in it but excluded from it; the decree of predestination is no more than the assignment to eternal life or eternal punishment. In this way the most restricted meaning is given to the word predestination, which is then made entirely dependent upon "the bare foreknowledge of God," is a matter of uncertainty, and is not worthy of the name predestination. In that case not God but man is the maker of history and the arbiter of its destiny. This error has been sufficiently refuted in the former paragraph. The important

difference between infra- and supralapsarianism. however, must be given more detailed discussion. At bottom this difference consists in a broader or a more restricted definition of the concept “predestination.” Augustine accepted a twofold restriction of this concept: in his system the decree of predestination follows that concerning creation and the fall, and he generally used the term “predestination” in the favorable sense, as a synonym for “election,” while he gave the preference to the term “foreknowledge” to indicate reprobation: predestination, then, is what *God* does, namely that which is good; while “foreknowledge” refers to what *man* does, namely evil. In general, scholasticism, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism, accepted this interpretation of the term predestination. Also in the writings of Reformed infralapsarian theologians the decree of creation and of the fall precedes that of election and of reprobation; but while most of them were willing to look upon reprobation as a part of predestination — just so the decree of predestination follows that of the fall — and to speak of a twin or double predestination, others considered it better to conceive of predestination as a synonym for election, and to discuss reprobation separately and under a different name. Now, if the term “foreknowledge” is not used in a Pelagian sense, and if the decree of reprobation is not withdrawn from the province of the will of God, as was done by later Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians, the difference is not essential but merely verbal. But it is characteristic of infralapsarianism that, in the decree, creation and the fall precede election and reprobation; while supralapsarianism's concept of predestination is broad enough to include creation and the fall, which are then looked upon as means to an end: the eternal destiny of rational creatures. In the Reformed Church and in Reformed theology equal recognition has always been given to both supra- and infralapsarianism, viewed as interpretations of the decree of predestination. To be sure, the Dutch confessional standards are

infralapsarian; nevertheless, no ecclesiastical assembly, not even the Synod of Dort, has ever troubled the supralapsarians. The Lambeth articles of Confession, purposely leave the question unanswered. Reformed theologians have always granted charter privileges to both conceptions. Spanheim used to say that in the cathedra he was supra, but when he was teaching his congregation he was infra. On the one hand, supralapsarians as well as infralapsarians teach that God is not the Author of sin, but that the cause of sin lies in the will of man. Though, as the Omnipotent One, God predestined the fall, and though, as Supreme Ruler, he executes his plan even by means of sin; nevertheless, he remains holy and righteous; of his own accord man falls and sins: the guilt is his alone. "Man falls according to the appointment of divine providence, but he falls by his own fault." Also, the supralapsarians did not arrive at their conception by means of philosophical speculation, but they presented their view because they considered it to come closer to the teaching of Scripture. just as Augustine arrived at the doctrine of predestination through his study of Paul, so Calvin became convinced of the truth of supralapsarianism by means of his reflection on the Scriptural doctrine of sin. According to his own statement he was not giving a philosophy but the truth of God's Word. On the other hand, Reformed infralapsarian theologians are fully agreed that man's fall, sin, and the eternal punishment of many was not the object of "bare foreknowledge" but of God's decree and foreordination. Hence, the difference does not concern the content of God's counsel. Both infra- and supralapsarianism deny the freedom of the will, reject the idea that faith is the cause of election and that sin is the cause of reprobation, and thus oppose Pelagianism; both in the final analysis pay homage to God's sovereignty. The difference concerns only the order of the decrees. Infralapsarians prefer the historical, causal order; supralapsarians defend the ideal, teleological order. The former give a more limited meaning to the concept predestination,

and exclude from it a preceding creation, fall, and providence; the latter subsume all the other decrees under predestination. The former emphasizes the manyness, the latter the oneness, of the decree. With the former each of the several decrees has significance by itself; with the latter all the preceding decrees are subordinate to the final decree.

The problem is not solved by means of an appeal to Scripture. Whereas infralapsarianism is supported by all those passages in which election and reprobation have reference to a fallen universe, and are represented as deeds of mercy and of justice, Deut. 7:6-8; Matt. 12:25, 26; John 15:19; Rom. 9:15, 16; Eph. 1:4-12; II Tim. 1:9; supralapsarianism seeks its strength in all those texts that declare God's absolute sovereignty, especially with reference to sin, Ps. 115:3; Prov. 16:4; Is. 10:15; 45:9; Jer. 18:6; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:17, 19-21. The fact that each of the two views leans for support on a certain group of texts without doing full justice to a different group indicates the one-sided character of both theories. Though infralapsarianism deserves praise because of its modesty — it abides by the historical, causal order — and though it *seems* to be less offensive and though it shows greater consideration for the demands of practical life, it fails to give satisfaction. It is just as difficult to conceive of *reprobation* as an act of God's justice as it is thus to conceive of election. Faith and good works, to be sure, are not the cause of election, but neither is sin the cause of reprobation; God's sovereign good pleasure is the cause of both; hence, in a certain sense, the decree of reprobation always precedes the decree to permit sin. Moreover, if in the divine consciousness the decree of reprobation follows that to permit sin, the question cannot be suppressed, "Then why did God permit sin?" Did this permission consist in a "bare foreknowledge" and was the fall in reality a frustration of God's plan? But no Reformed theologian, even though he be an infralapsarian, can ever or may

ever say this. In a certain sense he must include the fall in God's decree; he must conceive of it as having been foreordained. But why did God "by an efficacious permission" foreordain the fall? Infralapsarianism can answer this question only by referring to God's good pleasure, and then it agrees with supralapsarianism. Reprobation cannot be explained as an act of God's justice, for the first sinful deed at any rate was permitted by God's sovereignty. Reasoning backward, infralapsarianism finally arrives at the position of supralapsarianism; in case it should be unwilling to admit this, it would have to resort to foreknowledge. Add to all this the fact that *infra* places the decree of reprobation *after* the fall, but just where? Is *original* sin the only sin that is taken into account by the decree of reprobation, and in making this dreadful decree does God leave *actual* sins entirely out of consideration? If, as *infra* insists, reprobation must be referred to God's justice, then instead of placing this decree immediately after the entrance of original sin, why not place it after the complete accomplishment — respectively by each reprobate person — of all actual sins? This is exactly what was done by Arminius — who also included the sin of foreseen unbelief — but such a procedure would never do on the part of a Reformed theologian. Reprobation would then become dependent upon bare foreknowledge, i.e., upon man; man's sinful deeds would then become the final and deepest cause of reprobation; hence, in order to avoid this error the decree of reprobation was placed *immediately* after the fall. But by doing this *infra* becomes supralapsarian with respect to all *actual* sins: reprobation does not precede original sin, but it does precede all other sin. At first glance infralapsarianism seems to be more moderate and less offensive than supralapsarianism, but deeper study reveals the fact that appearances deceive.

Accordingly, supralapsarianism undoubtedly has in its favor the fact that it refrains from every attempt to justify God, and that both with respect to reprobation and with respect to election it rests in God's sovereign, incomprehensible, yet wise and holy good pleasure. Nevertheless, it is at least just as unsatisfactory as is infralapsarianism, and perhaps even more so. It wishes to pass for a solution, but in no sense whatever does it give a solution of even a single problem. In the first place, to say that the manifestation of all God's excellencies is the final goal of all of the ways of God is indeed correct; but when supra includes in that goal the manner in which the divine glory will be revealed in the eternal destiny of rational creatures, it errs. For, the eternal state of salvation or of perdition is not in itself the goal, but one of the means employed in order to reveal God's excellencies in a manner suited to the creature. It would not do to say that God would have been unable to manifest his glory by saving all men, if this had been his pleasure. Neither is it correct to say that in the eternal state of the reprobate God reveals his justice *exclusively*, and that in the eternal state of the elect he manifests his mercy *exclusively*. Also in the church, purchased with the blood of the Son, God's justice is revealed; and also in the place of perdition there are degrees of punishment and sparks of divine mercy. The final goal of all God's work's must needs be his glory, but the manner in which that glory will shine forth is not thereby given, but has been determined by God's will; and although there were wise and holy reasons why God purposed the perdition of many and not the salvation of all, nevertheless these reasons, though known to him, are not known to us: we are not able to say why God willed to make use of this means and not of another. A further objection to supralapsarianism is the fact that according to this view the objects of the decree of election and reprobation are men considered merely as possibilities and — as Comrie added — a Christ viewed as a mere possibility. To be sure by some this element has been eliminated

from the supralapsarian scheme. But the principle which gave rise to this error still remains. Logic requires that a possible Christ should be added to possible men as the object of election, for in the decree of election the church and its Head, i.e., the saved and the Savior cannot be separated.

But even aside from this, the decree of election and reprobation which has for Its object “creatable and fallible men” is not the real, but merely a tentative decree. In the end supralapsarianism is forced to proceed to the infralapsarian order in the elements of the decree. For, following the decree concerning the election and reprobation of these possible men comes the decree to create them and to permit them to fall, and this must be succeeded by another decree respecting these men, who are now no longer viewed as mere possibilities but as realities — even in the decree — viz., to elect some and to reprobate others. The logic of the supralapsarian scheme is very weak, indeed. Supralapsarianism really differs from infralapsarianism only in this respect, viz., that after the manner of Amyraldism, it prefixes a decree concerning possibilities to the infralapsarian series of decrees. But just how are we to conceive of a decree respecting *possible* men, whose *actual* future existence has as yet not been determined? In the consciousness of God there is an infinite number of “*possible* men,” who will never live. Hence, the decree of election and reprobation has for its object “nonentities,” not definite persons known to God by name. Finally, there is this difficulty connected with supra, viz., that it makes the eternal punishment of the reprobates an object of the divine will *in the same manner and in the same sense* as the eternal salvation of the elect; and that it makes sin, which leads to eternal destruction, a means *in the same manner and in the same sense* as the redemption in Christ is a means unto eternal salvation.

Now Reformed theologians all agree that the entrance of sin and punishment was willed and determined by God. It is perfectly true that words like “permission” and “foreknowledge” do not solve anything. The difficulty remains the same, and the same questions arise; viz., why, if God foreknew everything, did he create man fallible, and why did he not prevent the fall? Why did he allow all men to fall in Adam? Why does he not grant to all men faith and the blessing of hearing the Gospel? In brief, if God foreknows and permits something, he does this either “willingly” or “unwillingly.” The latter is impossible. Accordingly, only the former remains: God's permission is an “efficacious permission,” an act of his will. Nor should it be supposed that the idea of permission is of any force or value over against the charge that God is the Author of sin; for he who *permits or allows* someone to sin and to perish in his sin although he was able to prevent him from sinning is just as guilty as he who incites someone to sin. On the other hand, however, all agree that although sin is not “*excluded*” from the will of God it is, nevertheless, “*contrary*” to his will; that it is not merely a means to the final goal, but a disturbance in God's creation; and that Adam's fall was not a step ahead but a fall in the real sense of the word. It is also a fact that admits of no doubt that, however much logical reasoning may demur, no one is able to suggest other and better words than “permission, foreknowledge, preterition, dereliction,” etc. Even the most outspoken supralapsarian is not able to dispense with these words, neither in the pulpit nor in the cathedra. For, although it be admitted that there is a “predestination unto death,” no Reformed theologian has ever dared to speak of a “predestination unto sin.” Without any exception all (i.e., Zwingli, Calvin, Beza, Zanchius, Gomarus, Comrie, etc.) have rejected the idea that God is the Author of sin, that man was created unto damnation, that reprobation is the “cause” of sin, and that sin is the “efficient cause” of reprobation; and all have maintained, that the inexorable

character of God's justice is manifest in the decree of reprobation, that reprobation is the “accidental cause” of sin, and that sin is the “sufficient cause” of reprobation, etc. Accordingly and happily, supralapsarianism is always inconsistent: it begins by making a daring leap, but it soon retreats and returns to the previously abandoned position of infralapsarianism. This is very evident from the works of supralapsarians. Nearly all of them hesitate to place the decree of reprobation in its entirety and without any restriction before the decree to permit sin. The Thomists differentiated between a “negative and a positive reprobation”; the former was made to precede creation and fall, the latter was made to follow them. This same distinction, be it in a modified form, recurs in the works of Reformed theologians. Not only do all admit that reprobation should be distinguished from condemnation, which is the execution of that decree, takes place in time, and has sin for its cause; but in the decree of reprobation itself many differentiate between a preceding, general purpose of God to reveal his excellencies, especially his mercy and justice, in certain “creatable and fallible men”; and a subsequent, definite purpose to create these “possible men,” to permit them to fall and to sin, and to punish them for their sins.

Accordingly, neither supra- nor infralapsarianism has succeeded in its attempt to solve this problem and to do justice to the many-sidedness of Scripture. To a certain extent this failure is due to the one-sidedness that characterizes both views. In the first place it is incorrect, as we stated before, to define the “final goal” of all things as the revelation of God's mercy in the elect, and of his justice in the reprobate. God's glory and the manifestation of his excellencies is, to be sure, the final goal of all things; but the double state of salvation and damnation is not included in that final goal, but is related to it as a means. No one is able to prove that this double state must of necessity constitute an element in the final goal of God's glory. In all

his “outgoing works” God always has in view his own glory; but that he seeks to establish this glory in *this* and in no other way is to be ascribed to his sovereignty and to nothing else. But even aside from this, it is not true that God manifests his justice only in the damnation of the reprobate, and his mercy only in the salvation of the elect, for also in heaven God's justice and holiness shines forth, and also in hell there is a remnant of his mercy and compassion. Secondly, it is incorrect to represent the lost condition of the reprobate in hell as an object of predestination. To be sure, sin should not be referred to “bare foreknowledge and permission”; in a certain sense, the fall, sin, and eternal punishment are included in God's decree and willed by him. But this is true *in a certain sense* only, and not in the same sense as grace and salvation. These are the objects of his delight; but God does not delight in sin, neither has he pleasure in punishment. When he makes sin subservient to his glory, he does this by means of the exercise of his omnipotence, but to glorify God is contrary to sin's nature. And when he punishes the wicked, he does not take delight in their sufferings as such, but in this punishment he celebrates, the triumph of his virtues, Deut. 28:63; Ps. 2:4; Prov. 1:26; Lam. 3:33. Accordingly, though on the one hand, with a view to the all-comprehensive and immutable character of God's counsel, it is not wrong to speak of a “twofold predestination” (*gemina praedestinatio*); nevertheless, on the other hand, we must be careful to keep in mind that in the one case predestination is of a different nature than in the other. “Predestination is the disposition, goal and ordination of the means with a view to a goal. Since eternal damnation is not the goal but merely the termination of a person's life, therefore reprobation cannot properly be classified under predestination. For these two things are in conflict with each other: to ordain unto a goal and to ordain unto damnation. For by reason of its very nature, every goal is the very best something, the perfection of an object; damnation,

however, is the extreme evil and the greatest imperfection; hence the expression 'God has predestinated some men unto damnation' is incorrect." Hence, no matter how often and clearly Scripture tells us that sin and punishment were ordained by God, nevertheless, the words "purpose" (*prothesis*), "foreknowledge" (*prognosis*) and "foreordination" (*proorismos*) are used almost exclusively with reference to "predestination unto glory." In the third place, there is still another ground for the assertion that those err who coordinate "predestination unto eternal death" with "predestination unto eternal life," and view the former as a goal in the same sense as the latter; while it is true that certain *individuals* constitute the object of reprobation, *the human race* under a new Head, namely Christ, is the object of election; hence, by grace not only certain individuals are saved, but the human race itself together with the entire cosmos is saved. Moreover, we are not to suppose that merely a few of God's virtues are revealed in this salvation of the human race and of the universe, so that in order to reveal God's justice the state of eternal perdition must needs be called into being; on the contrary, in the consummated Kingdom of God all of God's virtues and excellencies are unfolded: his justice and his grace, his holiness and his love, his sovereignty and his mercy. Hence, this "state of glory" is the real and direct end of creation, though even this goal is subordinate to the exaltation of God. In the fourth place, both *supra* and *infra* err when they regard the various elements of the decree as standing in subordinate relation to each other. Now it is true, of course, that the means are subordinate to the final end in view, but from this it does not follow that they are subordinate to one another. Creation is not a mere means toward the fall, neither is the fall a mere means toward grace and perseverance, nor are these in turn merely means toward salvation and perdition. We should never lose sight of the fact that the decrees are as rich in content as the entire history of the universe, for the latter is the unfoldment of the former. The history of the

universe can never be made to fit into a little scheme of logic. It is entirely incorrect to suppose that of the series: creation, fall, sin, Christ, faith, unbelief, etc., each constituent is merely a means toward the attainment of the next, which as soon as it is present renders the former useless. As Twissus already remarked, "The different elements of the decree do not stand to one another in a relation merely of subordination, but they are also coordinately related." It is certainly wrong to suppose that the sole purpose of creation was to produce the fall; on the contrary, by means of God's creative activity a universe that will remain even in the state of glory was called into being. The fall took place not only in order that there might be a "creature in the condition of misery," but together with all its consequences it will retain its significance. Christ not merely became a *Mediator*, which would have been all that was necessary for the expiation of sin, but he was also ordained by God to be the *Head* of the church. The history of the universe is not a mere means which loses its value as soon as the end of the age is reached, but it has influence and leaves fruits, for eternity. Moreover, here on earth we should not conceive of election and reprobation as two straight and parallel lines; on the contrary, in the unbeliever there is much that is not the result of reprobation, and in the believer there is much that should not be ascribed to election. On the one hand, both election and reprobation presuppose sin, and are deeds of mercy and of justice, Rom. 9:15; Eph. 1:4; on the other hand both are also deeds of divine right and sovereignty, Rom. 9:11, 17, 21. So, Adam even before the fall is a type of Christ, I Cor. 15:47ff.; nevertheless, in Scripture the fact of the incarnation always rests upon the fall of the human race, Heb. 2:14ff. At times Scripture expresses itself so strongly that reprobation and election are coordinated, and God is represented as having purposed eternal perdition as well as eternal salvation, Luke 2:34; John 3:19-21; I Pet. 2:7, 8; Rom. 9:17, 18, 22, etc.; but in other passages eternal death is entirely absent in the

description of the future; the victorious consummation of the kingdom of God, the new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem in which God will be all and in all is pictured to us as the end of all things, I Cor. 15; Rev. 21, 22; the universe is represented as existing for the church, and the church for Christ, I Cor. 3 :21-23; and reprobation is completely subordinated to election.

Accordingly, neither the supra- nor the infralapsarian view of predestination is able to do full justice to the truth of Scripture, and to satisfy our theological thinking. The true element in supralapsarianism is: that it emphasizes the unity of the divine decree and the fact that God had one final aim in view, that sin's entrance into the universe was not something unexpected and unlooked for by God but that he willed sin in a certain sense, and that the work of creation was immediately adapted to God's redemptive activity so that even before the fall, i.e., in the creation of Adam, Christ's coming was definitely fixed. And the true element in infralapsarianism is: that the decrees manifest not only a unity but also a diversity (with a view to their several objects), that these decrees reveal not only a teleological but also a causal order, that creation and fall cannot merely be regarded as means to an end, and that sin should be regarded not as an element of progress but rather as an element of disturbance in the universe so that in and by itself it cannot have been willed by God. In general, the formulation of the final goal of all things in such a manner that God reveals his justice in the reprobate and his mercy in the elect is too simple and incomplete. The "state of glory" will be rich and glorious beyond all description. We expect a new heaven, a new earth, a new humanity, a renewed universe, a constantly progressing and undisturbed unfoldment. Creation and the fall, Adam and Christ, nature and grace, faith and unbelief, election and reprobation — all together and each in its own way — are so many factors, acting not only

subsequently to but also in coordination with one another, collaborating with a view to that exalted state of glory. Indeed, even the universe as it now exists together with its history, constitutes a continuous revelation of God's virtues. It is not only a means toward a higher and richer revelation that is still future, but it has value in itself. It will continue to exert its influence also in the coming dispensation, and it will continue to furnish material for the exaltation and glorification of God by a redeemed humanity. Accordingly, between the different elements of the decree — as also between the facts of the history of the universe — there is not only a causal and teleological but also an organic relation. Because of the limited character of our reasoning powers we must needs proceed from the one or from the other viewpoint; hence, the advocates of a causal world and life-view and the defenders of a teleological philosophy are engaged in continual warfare. But this disharmony does not exist in the mind of God. He sees the whole, and surveys all things in their relations. All things are eternally present in his consciousness. His decree is a unity: it is a single conception. And in that decree all the different elements assume the same relation which a posteriori we even now observe between the facts of history, and which will become fully disclosed in the future. This relation is so involved and complicated that neither the adjective “supralapsarian” nor “infralapsarian” nor any other term is able to express it. It is both causal and teleological: that which precedes exerts its influence upon that which follows, and that which is still future already determines the past and the present. There is a rich, all-sided “reciprocity.” Predestination, in the generally accepted sense of that term: the foreordination of the eternal state of rational creatures and of all the means necessary to that end, is not the sole, all-inclusive and all-comprehensive, purpose of God. It is a very important part of God's decree but it is not synonymous with the decree. God's decree or counsel is the main concept because it is all-comprehensive; it

embraces all things without any exception: heaven and earth, spirit and matter, visible and invisible things, organic and inorganic creatures; it is the single will of God concerning the entire universe with reference to the past, the present, and the future. But predestination concerns the eternal state of rational creatures, and the *means* thereto: but not *all* things that ever come into being nor all events that ever happen can be included in these means. Hence, in a previous paragraph we discussed “providence” as a thing by itself, although the relation between it and predestination was clearly shown. In the doctrine of God's decree common grace should receive a much more detailed discussion than was formerly the case, and should be recognized in its own rights. Briefly stated, God's decree together with the history of the universe which answers to it should not be exclusively described — after the manner of infra- and supralapsarianism — as a straight line indicating a relation merely of before and after, cause and effect, means and goal; but it should also be viewed as a system the several elements of which are coordinately related to one another and cooperate with one another toward that goal which always was and is and will be the deepest ground of all existence, namely, the glorification of God. As in an organism all the members are dependent upon one another and in a reciprocal manner determine one another, so also the universe is God's work of art, the several parts of which are organically related. And of that universe, considered in its length and breadth, the counsel or decree of God is the eternal idea.

The Knowledge of God

by Herman Bavinck

God is the highest good of man-that is the testimony of the whole Scriptures. The Bible begins with the account that God created man after His own image and likeness, in order that he should know God his Creator aright, should love Him with all his heart, and should live with Him in eternal blessedness. And the Bible ends with the description of the new Jerusalem, whose inhabitants shall see God face to face and shall have His name upon their foreheads.

Between these two moments lies the revelation of God in all its length and breadth. As its content this revelation has the one, great, comprehensive promise of the covenant of grace: I will be a God unto thee, and ye shall be my people. And as its mid-point and its high-point this revelation has its Immanuel, God-with-us. For the promise and its fulfillment go hand in hand. The word of God is the beginning, the principle, the seed, and it is in the act that the seed comes into its full realization. Just as at the beginning God called things into being by His word, so by His word He will in the course of the ages bring into being the new heaven and the new earth, in which the tabernacle of God shall be among men.

That is why Christ, in whom the Word became flesh, is said to be full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

He is the Word which in the beginning was with God and Himself was God, and as such He was the life and the light of men. Because the Father shares His life with Christ and gives expression to His thought in Christ, therefore the full being of God is revealed in Him. He not only declares the Father to us and discloses His name to us, but in Himself He shows us and gives us the Father. Christ is God expressed and God given. He is God revealing Himself and God sharing Himself, and therefore He is full of truth and also full of grace. The word of the promise, I will be a God unto thee, included

within itself from the very moment in which it was uttered, the fulfillment, I am thy God. God gives Himself to His people in order that His people should give themselves to Him.

In the Scriptures we find God constantly repeating His declaration: I am thy God. From the mother-promise of Genesis 3 :15 on, this rich testimony, comprehending all blessedness and all salvation whatsoever, is repeated again and again, be it in the lives of the patriarchs, in the history of the people of Israel, or in that of the church of the New Testament. And in response the church throughout the ages comes with the endless varieties of its language of faith, speaking in gratitude and praise: Thou art our God, and we are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture.

This declaration of faith on the part of the church is not a scientific doctrine, nor a form of unity that is being repeated, but is rather a confession of a deeply felt reality, and of a conviction of reality that has out of experience in life. The prophets and apostles, and the saints generally who appear before us in the Old and New Testament and later in the church of Christ, did not sit and philosophize about God in abstracted concepts, but rather confessed what God meant to them and what they owed to Him in all the circumstances of life. God was for them not at all a cold concept, which they then proceeded rationally to analyze, but He was a living, personal force, a reality infinitely more real than the world around them. Indeed, He was to them the one, eternal, worshipful Being. They reckoned with Him in their lives, they lived in His tent, walked as if always before His face, served Him in His courts, and worshiped Him in His sanctuary.

The genuineness and depth of their experience comes to expression in the language they used to express what God meant to them. They did not have to strain for words, for their lips overflowed with what

welled up out of their hearts, and the world of man and nature supplied them with figures of speech. God was to them a King, a Lord, a Valiant One, a Leader, a Shepherd, a Savior, a Redeemer, a Helper, a Physician, a Man, and a Father. All their bliss and well-being, their truth and righteousness, their life and mercy, their strength and power, their peace and rest they found in Him. He was a sun and shield to them, a buckler, a light and a fire, a fountain and a well-head, a rock and shelter, a high refuge and a tower, a reward and a shadow, a city and a temple. All that the world has to offer in discrete and sub-divided goods was to them an image and likeness of the unfathomable fullness of the salvation available in God for His people. Hence it is that David in Psalm 16 :2 (according to a telling translation) addresses Jehovah as follows: Thou art my Lord; I have no higher good than Thou. Thus also Asaph sang in Psalm 73: Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For the saint, heaven in all its blessedness and glory would be void and stale without God; and when he lives in communion with God he cares for nothing on earth, for the love of God far transcends all other goods.

Such is the experience of the children of God. It is an experience which they have felt because God presented Himself to them for their enjoyment in the Son of His love. In this sense Christ said that eternal life, that is, the totality of salvation, consists for man in the knowledge of the one, true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

It was an auspicious moment in which Christ spoke those words. He stood at the point of crossing the brook Kidron in order to enter the garden of Gethsemane and to suffer the last struggle of His soul there. Before He proceeds to that point, however, He prepares

Himself as our High Priest for His passion and death, and He prays the Father that the Father may glorify Him in His suffering and after it, so that the Son in turn may glorify the Father in giving out all those blessings which He is now about to achieve by His obedience unto death. And when the Son prays in this way, He knows of nothing to desire except that which is the Father's own will and good pleasure. The Father has given Him power over all flesh in order that the Son should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. Such eternal life consists of nothing other than the knowledge of the one, true God and of Jesus Christ who was sent to reveal Him (John 17:1-3).

Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 24-26.

The Divine and Human Nature of Christ

by Herman Bavinck

The testimony which, according to Scripture, Christ has given of Himself is developed and confirmed by the preaching of the apostles. The confession that a man, named Jesus, is the Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, is in such direct conflict with our experience and with all of our thinking, and especially with all the inclinations of our heart, that no one can honestly and with his whole soul appropriate it without the persuasive activity of the Holy Spirit. By nature everybody stands in enmity to this confession, for it is not a confession natural to man. No one can confess that Jesus is the Lord

except through the Holy Spirit, but neither can anyone speaking by the Holy Spirit call Jesus accursed; he must recognize Him as his Savior and King (1 Cor. 12:3).

Hence when Christ appears on earth and Himself confesses that He is the Son of God, He did not leave it at that, but He also had a care, and He continues to have a care, that this confession finds entrance into the world, and is believed by the church. He called His apostles, and He instructed them, and made them witnesses to His words and deeds, to His death and resurrection. He gave them the Holy Spirit who brought them personally to the confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), and who later caused them, from the day of Pentecost on, to minister as preachers of those things which their eyes had seen, and they beheld, and their hands had handled of the Word of life (1 John 1:1). The apostles were really not the real witnesses. The Spirit of truth, proceeding from the Father, is the original, infallible, and almighty witness to Christ, and the apostles are that only in Him and through Him (John 15:26 and Acts 5:32). And it is that same Spirit of truth who by means of the testimony of the apostles brings the church of all ages to the confession and preserves them in it: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69).

When the four Evangelists in regular order report the events of the life of Jesus, they usually refer to Him simply by the name of Jesus without any more particular qualification or addendum. They tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that Jesus was led into the wilderness, that Jesus saw the multitude and went up the mountain, and so on. Jesus, the historical person who lived and died in Palestine, is the object of their chronicle. And so we find a few times in the letters of the apostles, too, that Jesus is designated simply by

His historical name. Paul says, for instance, that no one can say that *Jesus* is the Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). John testifies that whoever believes that *Jesus* is the Christ is born of God (1 John 1 :5 compare 2:22 and 4:20). And in the book of Revelation we read of the faith of Jesus, and of the witnesses and witness of *Jesus*.

Still, in the letters of the apostles the use of this name without qualification is rare. Usually the name occurs in connection with: the Lord, Christ, the Son of God, and like designations, and the full name usually reads: Our Lord Jesus Christ. But, irrespective of whether the name Jesus is used alone or in connection with other names, the connection with the historical person who was born in Bethlehem and who died on the cross always comes to expression in it.

The whole New Testament, that of the epistles or letters as well as that of the gospels, rests on the foundation of historical events. The Christ- figure is not an idea nor an ideal of the human mind, as many in past ages maintained, and as some in our time also assert, but is a real figure who manifested Himself in a particular period and in a particular person in the man Jesus.

True, the various events in the life of Jesus recede into the background in the letters. Those letters have a different purpose than the gospels have. They do not chronicle the history of the life of Jesus but point out the significance which that life has for the redemption of mankind. But all of the apostles are familiar with the person and life of Jesus, are acquainted with His words and deeds, and they proceed to show us that this Jesus is the Christ, exalted by God to His own right hand, in order to grant repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:36 and 5:31).

Often, therefore, in the letters of the apostles mention is made of events in the life of Jesus. They picture Him before the eyes of their auditors and readers (Gal. 3 :1). They stress the fact that John the Baptist was His herald and precursor (Acts 13:25 and 19:4), that He comes from the family of Judah and the stem of David (Rom. 1:3; Rev. 5:5 and 22:16), that He was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), was circumcised on the eighth day (Rom. 15 :8), that He was brought up in Nazareth (Acts 2:22 and 3:6), and that He also had brothers (1 Cor. 9:5 and Gal. 1:19). They tell us that He was perfectly holy and sinless,¹ that He presented Himself to us as an example (1 Cor. 11:1 and 1 Peter 2:21), and that He spoke words that have authority for us (Acts 20:35 and 1 Cor. 7:10-12). But it is especially His dying that is significant for us. The cross stands at the central point in the apostolic preaching. Betrayed by one of the twelve apostles whom He chose (1 Cor. 11:23 and 1 Cor. 15:5), and not recognized by the princes of this world as the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), He was put to death by the Jews (Acts 4:10; 5 :30; and 1 Thess. 2:15), dying on the accursed wood of the cross.² But, even though He suffered greatly in Gethsemane and upon Golgotha,³ He has by the pouring out of His blood achieved the reconciliation and an eternal righteousness.⁴ And therefore God raised Him up, exalted Him to His right hand, and appointed Him Lord and Christ, Prince and Savior for all nations.⁵

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From these few data it is adequately evident that the apostles did not deny, ignore, or neglect the facts of Christianity but that they fully honored them and penetrated their spiritual significance. No trace is to be found in them of any separation or conflict between the redemptive event and the redemptive word, however much some in the past have tried to postulate such a conflict. The redemptive event is the actualization of the redemptive word; in the second the first

takes on its real and concrete form and is at the same time therefore its illumination and interpretation.

If any doubt about this remains at all, it is entirely removed by the battle which the apostles already in their day had to conduct. It was not merely in the second, third, and following centuries but also in the apostolic period that certain men appeared who regarded the facts of Christianity of subordinate and transient importance, or else ignored them altogether, and who held that the idea was the main thing or in itself quite enough. What difference does it make, they argued, whether or not Christ bodily rose from the grave? If only He lives on in the spirit, our salvation is sufficiently assured! But the apostle Paul thought very differently about that and in 1 Corinthians 15 he placed the reality and the significance of the resurrection in the clearest possible light. He preaches Christ according to the Scriptures, that Christ who, according to the counsel of the Father, died, was buried, and was raised again, who after His resurrection was seen of many disciples, and whose resurrection is the foundation and surety of our salvation. And, if possible, John puts even more emphasis on the fact that he is a declarer of what he has seen with his eyes and handled with his hands of the Word of life (1 John 1:1-3). The principle of the antichrist is this that he denies the incarnation of the Word; and the Christian confession, to the contrary, consists of the belief that the Word has become flesh, that the Son of God has come by water and by blood (John 1:14 and 1 John 3 :2-3 and 5 :6). The whole apostolic preaching of the letters and of the gospels, hence of the whole New Testament, comes down to the claim that *Jesus*, born of Mary and crucified, is — witness the evidence of His exaltation — the *Christ*, the Son of God.⁶

Now it deserves notice that, in connection with the content and purpose of the apostolic preaching, the use of the single name *Jesus*,

without further qualification, is rare in the letters. Usually the apostles speak of Jesus Christ, or of Christ Jesus, or, even more fully, of *the* or *our* Lord Jesus Christ. Even the Evangelists who in their chronicle for the most part speak of Jesus make use, either at the beginning or at an important turning point of their gospel, of the full name Jesus Christ.⁷ This they do by way of indicating who the person is concerning whom they are writing their evangel. In the Acts and in the letters this usage becomes the regular practice. The apostles speak not of a human being whose name was Jesus, but, by adding the terms Christ and Lord, and the like, they give expression to their appreciation of who that man is. They are preachers of the gospel that in the man Jesus the Christ of God has appeared on the earth.

Thus they had gradually, during their going about with Him, learned to know Him. And especially after that important hour in Caesarea Philippi a light had dawned for them upon His person, and they had all confessed with Peter that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). Thus Jesus had revealed Himself to them, at first more or less concealed under the name *Son of man*, but gradually more clearly and plainly as the end of His life approached. In the highpriestly prayer He designates Himself by the name Jesus Christ whom the Father has sent (John 17:3). Precisely because He gave Himself out to be the Christ, the Son of God, He was charged by the Jewish court with blasphemy and was condemned to die (Matt. 26:63). And the superscription above His cross read: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (Matt. 27:37 and John 19:19).

It is true that the disciples could not reconcile these Messianic claims of Jesus with His approaching passion and death (Matt. 16:22). But through the resurrection, and after it, they learned to know also the necessity and the meaning of the cross. Now they recognized that

God had by the resurrection made this Jesus, whom the Jews had destroyed. to be Lord and Christ and had exalted Him to be a Prince and Savior (Acts 2:36 and 5:31). This does not mean to say that before His resurrection Jesus was not yet Christ and Lord, and that He became this only after the resurrection, for Christ had proclaimed Himself as the Christ beforehand and He was then also acknowledged and confessed as such by the disciples (Matt. 16:16). But before the resurrection He was Messiah in the form of a servant, in a form and shape which concealed His dignity as Son of God from the eyes of men. In the resurrection and after it He laid aside that form of a servant, He re-assumed the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), and was therefore appointed as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness that dwelt in Him (Rom. 1:3).

It is therefore that Paul can say that He now, after it has pleased God to reveal His Son to him, no longer knows Christ according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). Before His repentance He knew Christ only according to the flesh, judged Him solely by His external appearance, according to the form of a servant in which He walked about on the earth. Then he could not believe that this Jesus, who was without any glory and was even hanged on the cross and put to death, was the Christ. But by his conversion all that has changed. Now he knows and judges Christ not according to appearance, not according to external, temporal, servant forms, but according to the spirit, according to what was in Christ, according to what He really was internally and in His resurrection externally proved to be.

And the same can in a sense be said of all the apostles. It is true that they had before the passion and death of Christ been brought to a believing confession of His Messianic reality. But in their mind there remained an irreconcilability of this reality with the passion and

death. The resurrection, however, reconciled this conflict for them. He was to them now the same Christ who has descended into the lower parts of the earth and is ascended up far above all heavens, in order that He might fulfill all things (Eph. 4:9). Speaking of Christ, the apostles think in one and the same breath of the deceased and of the raised Christ, of the crucified and of the glorified Christ. They connect their gospel with the historical Jesus not only, who lived a few years back in Palestine and died there, but also to that same Jesus as He is, exalted, and seated at the right hand of God's power. They stand, so to speak, at the point of bisection of the horizontal line, which is tied to the past, to history, and the vertical line, which connects them with the living Lord in heaven. Christianity is therefore an historical religion, but at the same time a religion which lives in the present out of eternity. The disciples of Jesus are not, according to His historical name, Jesuites, but, according to the name of His office, Christians.

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This peculiar position which the apostles took in their preaching after the resurrection is the reason why they no longer referred to Jesus by His historical name merely, but virtually always spoke of Him as Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, and so on. As a matter of fact the name Christ soon lost its official significance in the circle of the disciples and began to take on that of a given name. The conviction that Jesus was the Christ was so strong that He could simply be called Christ, even without the article preceding it. This occurs a few times even in the gospels.⁸ But with the apostles, particularly with Paul, this becomes the rule. Moreover, the two names, Jesus Christ, were more than once reversed, especially by Paul, with a view to accentuating even more the Messianic reality of Christ, and then the name became Christ Jesus. This designation,

Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus, was the pre-eminent name for the early churches. The use and significance of the name in the Old Testament is carried over to Christ in the New. The Name of the Lord, or the Name alone, was in the Old Testament the denomination of the revealed glory of God. In the days of the New Testament that glory has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ; and thus the strength of the church now stands in His name. In that name the apostles baptize (Acts 2:38), speak and teach (Acts 4:18), heal the cripple (Acts 3 :6), and forgive sin (Acts 10:43). This name is resisted and it is attacked (Acts 26:9). The confession of it brings on suffering (Acts 5 :41). It is appealed to (Acts 22:8) and is magnified (Acts 19:17). In this sense the name of Jesus Christ was a sort of compendium of the confession of the church, the strength of its faith, and the anchor of its hope. Just as Israel in ancient times gloried in the name of Jehovah, so the church of the New Testament finds its strength in the name of Jesus Christ. In this name the name of Jehovah has come into its full revelation.

The name of Lord, which in the New Testament is constantly connected with that of Jesus Christ, points in the same direction. In the gospels Jesus is addressed by the name Lord a number of times by persons who were not of the disciples, but nevertheless call on Him for help. In such instances the name usually carries no more force than that of Rabbi or Master. But we also find this name often spoken by the disciples.⁹ Further, in the gospel accounts the name of Jesus is sometimes interchanged by Luke and John with that of Lord.¹⁰ And, finally, Jesus Himself also makes use of that name, designating Himself as the Lord.¹¹

In the mouth of Jesus Himself and of the disciples this name of the Lord takes on a much profounder significance than is contained in the appellation *Rabbi* or *Master*. Just what everybody who came to

Jesus for help and addressed Him with the name Lord meant by it cannot be said with certainty. But Jesus was in His own consciousness the teacher, the master, the Lord pre-eminently, and He ascribed an authority to Himself which went far beyond that of the scribes. So much is evident already in such passages as Matthew 23:1-11 and Mark 1:22 and 27 where Jesus exalts Himself as the only Master above all other. But it is much more resolutely expressed, and is put beyond all possibility of doubt, when He calls Himself a Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8) and elsewhere calls Himself David's Son and David's Lord (Matt. 22:43-45). In these claims nothing less is involved than that He is the Messiah, who is seated at the right hand of God, shares His power, and judges of the living and the dead.[12](#)

This deep significance which attaches itself to the name of Lord is owing in part also, presumably, to the fact that the names of Jehovah and Adonai of the Old Testament were translated by the Greek *kurios*, Lord, in the New, that is, by the same word which was also applied to the Christ. As Christ more and more clearly explained Himself, who He was, and as the disciples understood better and better which revelation of God had come to them in Christ, the name of Lord took on a richer and richer significance. Texts of the Old Testament in which God was spoken of were applied to the Christ in the New without hesitation. Thus in Mark 1:3 the text from Isaiah, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight, is referred to and applied to the preparation by John the Baptist as its fulfillment. In Christ, God Himself, the Lord, has come to His people. And the disciples, by confessing Jesus as Lord, have thus more and more clearly expressed that God Himself had revealed and given Himself to them in the person of Christ. It is Thomas who mounts to the very climax of this confession during Jesus' sojourn on earth when he falls at the feet of the resurrected Christ and addresses Him with the words: My Lord and my God (John 20:28).

After the resurrection the name of Lord becomes the name commonly used for Jesus in the circle of His disciples. We find it continually in the Acts and in the letters, especially the letters of Paul. Sometimes the name Lord is used alone, but usually it goes combined with other designations: the Lord Jesus, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or our Lord Jesus Christ, or our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and so on. By using this name of Lord the believers express that Jesus Christ who was humiliated to the point of death and the cross, has by reason of His perfect obedience been raised to Lord and Prince (Acts 2:35 and 5:31), who is seated at God's right hand (Acts 2:34), who is Lord of all (Acts 10:36): first of all the church which He has purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), and further of all creation which He will sometime judge as the Judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42 and 17:31).

Whoever, therefore, shall call upon the name of Jesus as Christ and Lord, shall be saved (Acts 2:21 and 1 Cor. 1:2). To be Christian is to confess with the mouth and to believe with the heart that God has raised Him up from the dead.¹³ The content of the preaching is: Christ Jesus, the Lord (2 Cor. 4:5). So completely is the essence of Christianity epitomized in this confession that in the writings of Paul the name of Lord almost comes to be used as a given name applied to Christ in His distinction from the Father and the Spirit. As Christians we have one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him, and one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will (1 Cor. 8:6 and 12:11). Just as the name of God in the writings of Paul becomes the domestic name of the Father, so the name of Lord becomes the domestic name of Christ.

The apostolic blessing, accordingly, prays that the church may have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship

of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13). The one name of God interprets itself in the three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

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If Christ, according to the testimony of the apostles, occupies so high a place, it is no wonder that all kinds of Divine attributes and works are ascribed to Him, and that even the Divine nature is recognized in Him.

The figure we encounter in the person of Christ on the pages of Scripture is a unique figure. On the one hand, He is very man. He became flesh and came into the flesh (John 1:14 and 1 John 4:2-3). He bore the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). He came of the fathers, according to the flesh (Rom. 9:5), of Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:16), of Judah's line (Heb. 7:14), and of David's generation (Rom 1:3). He was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), partook of our flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), possessed a spirit (Matt. 27:50), a soul (Matt. 26:38), and a body (1 Peter 2:24), and was human in the full, true sense. As a child He grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40 and 52). He was hungry and thirsty, sorrowful and joyful, was moved by emotion and stirred to anger.¹⁴ He placed Himself under the law and was obedient to it until death.¹⁵ He suffered, died on the cross, and was buried in a garden. He was without form or comeliness. When we looked upon Him there was no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and unworthy of esteem, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:2-3).

Nevertheless this same man was distinguished from all men and raised high above them. Not only was He according to His human nature conceived by the Holy Spirit; not only was He throughout His life, despite all temptation, free from sin; and not only was He after

His death raised up again and taken into heaven; but the same subject, the same person, the same I who humiliated Himself so deeply that He assumed the form of a servant and became obedient unto the death of the cross, already existed in a different form of existence long before His incarnation and humiliation. He existed then in the form of God and thought it no robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6). At His resurrection and ascension He simply received again the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). He is eternal as God Himself, having been with Him already in the beginning (John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:13); He is omnipresent, so that, though walking about on the face of the earth, He is simultaneously in the bosom of the Father in heaven (John 1:18 and 3:13) ; and after His glorification He remains with His church and fulfills all in all;16 He is unchangeable and faithful and is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8); He is omniscient, so that He hears prayers;17 He is the One who knows all men's hearts (Acts 1 :24; unless the reference here is to the Father); He is omnipotent so that all things are subjected unto Him and all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, and is the chief of all kings.18

While in possession of all these Divine attributes, He also shares in the Divine works. Together with the Father and the Spirit He is the creator of all things (John 1:3 and Col. 1:5). He is the firstborn, the beginning, and the Head of all creatures (Col. 1:15 and Rev. 3:14). He upholds all things by the word of His might, so that they are not only of Him but also continuously in Him and through Him (Heb. 1:3 and Col. 1:17). And, above all, He preserves, reconciles, and restores all things and gathers them into one under Himself as Head. As such He bears especially the name of the Savior of the world. In the Old Testament the name of Savior or Redeemer was given to God,19 but

in the New Testament the Son as well as the Father bears this name. In some places this name is given to God,[20](#) and in some places it is given to Christ.[21](#) Sometimes it is not clear whether the name refers to God or to Christ (Tit. 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1). But it is Christ in whom and through whom the saving work of God is wholly effected.

All this points to a unity between Father and Son, between God and Christ, such as nowhere else exists between the Creator and His creature. Even though Christ has assumed a human nature which is finite and limited and which began to exist in time, as person, as Self, Christ does not in Scripture stand on the side of the creature but on the side of God. He partakes of God's virtues and of His works; He possesses the same Divine nature. This last point comes into particularly clear expression in the three names which are given Christ: that of the Image, the Word, and the Son of God.

Christ is the Image of God, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person.[22](#) In Christ the invisible God has become visible. Whoever sees Him sees the Father (John 14:9). Whoever wants to know who God is and what He is must behold the Christ. As Christ is, such is the Father. Further, Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1 and Rev. 19:13). In Him the Father has perfectly expressed Himself: His wisdom, His will, His excellences, His whole being. He has given Christ to have life in Himself (John 5 :26). Whoever wants to learn to know God's thought, God's counsel, and God's will for mankind and the world, let him listen to Christ, and hear Him (Matt. 17:5). Finally, Christ is the Son of God, *the Son*, as John describes Him, often without any further qualification (1 John 2:22 if. and Heb. 1:1, 8), the one and only-begotten, the own and beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased.[23](#) Whoever would be a child of God, let him accept Christ, for all who accept Him

receive the right and the power to be called the children of God (John 1:12).

Scripture finally places its crown upon this testimony of Scripture by also allowing Him the Divine name. Thomas confessed Him already before the ascension as his Lord and his God (John 20:28). John testifies of Him that as the Word He was with God at the beginning and Himself was God. Paul declares that He is from the fathers according to the flesh but that according to His essence He is God above all, to be blessed forever (Rom. 9:5). The letter to the Hebrews states that He is exalted high above the angels and is by God Himself addressed by the name of God (Heb. 1:8-9). Peter speaks of Him as our God and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1). In the baptismal mandate of Jesus as reported in Matthew 28:19, and in the benedictions of the apostles,²⁴ Christ stands on one line with the Father and the Spirit. The name and essence, the attributes and works of the Godhead are recognized in the Son (and the Spirit) as well as in the Father.

Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God — upon this stone is the church built. From the very beginning the wholly unique significance of Christ was clear to all believers. He was confessed by them all as the Lord who by His teaching and life had accomplished salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and immortality, who was thereupon raised by the Father to His right hand, and who would soon return as Judge to judge the living and the dead. The same names that are given Him in the letters of the apostles are given Him also in the earliest Christian writings. By those names He is addressed in the early prayers and songs. All were convinced that there is one God, that they were His children, one Lord who had made sure and granted to them the love of God, and one Spirit, who caused them all to walk in newness of life. The baptismal mandate of Matthew 28:19, which

came into general use at the end of the apostolic period, is the evidence of this unanimity of conviction.

But the moment Christians began to reflect on the content of this confession, all kinds of difference of opinion became apparent. The members of the church, who were previously educated in Jewry or heathendom and for the most part were among the untutored of the country, were not in position immediately to appropriate the apostolic teaching in their own minds. They lived in a society in which all kinds of ideas and currents of thought were criss-crossing, and thus they continuously were subject to much temptation and error. Even during the life of the apostles we notice that various heretical teachers had forced their way into the church and tried to wrench it from the fixity of its belief. At Colosse, for instance, there were members who did injustice to the person and work of Christ and changed the gospel into a new law (Col. 2:3ff. and 16ff.). At Corinth certain libertines stood up, who, abusing Christian liberty, wanted to be bound to no rule (1 Cor. 6:12 and 8:1). The apostle John in his first letter conducts an argument against certain so-called prophets who denied the coming of Christ into the flesh and thus did violence to the genuineness of His human nature (1 John 2:18ff.; 4:1ff.; 5:5ff.).

And so it remained in the post-apostolic period. In fact, the errors and heresies grew in variety, force, and distribution from the second century on. There were those who believed in the real human nature of Christ, in His supernatural birth, His resurrection and ascension, but who recognized the Divine in Him in nothing more than an unusual measure of the gifts and powers of the Spirit. These were thought of as having been given Him at His baptism in order to equip Him for His religious-moral task. The followers of this movement lived under the influence of the deistic, Jewish idea of the

relationship of God and the world. They simply could not conceive of a more intimate relationship between God and man than one which consisted of a sharing of gifts and abilities. Jesus, accordingly, was indeed a richly endowed person, a religious genius, but He was and He remained a man.

But others, brought up formerly in heathendom, found themselves attracted rather to the polytheistic idea. They thought that they could very well understand that Christ, according to His inner nature, should be one of the many, or even perhaps the highest, of all Divine beings. But they could not believe that such a Divine, pure being could have assumed a material and fleshly nature. And so they sacrificed the real humanity of Christ and said that it was only temporarily, and in appearance merely, that He had gone about on earth, much as the Angels according to Old Testament report had often done. Both thought-currents, both movements, continue up to the present day. At one time the Divinity of Christ is sacrificed to the humanity; at another it is the humanity that is sacrificed to the Divinity. There are always extremes which sacrifice the idea to the fact, or the fact to the idea. They do not comprehend the unity and harmony of the two.

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But the Christian church from the very beginning stood on a different basis and in the person of Christ confessed the most intimate, the profoundest, and therefore the altogether unique, communion of God and man. Its representatives in the earliest period sometimes expressed themselves in an awkward way. They had to struggle, first to form a somewhat clear notion of the reality, and then to give expression to this idea in clear language. But, all the same, the church did not for that reason let itself be pushed off its

base. Rather, the church avoided the one and the other extreme and clung to the teaching of the apostles concerning the person of Christ.

However, when one and the same person shares in the Divine nature and also is very man, it follows that an effort at definition must be made, and at a sharp delineation of how that person is related both to the Deity and to the world. And when this effort was made, a path of error and heresy defined itself again to the right 'and to the left.

When, in other words, the unity of God — which is a fundamental truth of Christianity — was understood in such a way that the being of God was perfectly coterminous and coincident with the person of the Father, then there remained no room in the Godhead for the Christ. Christ then was pushed outside the pale of deity, and placed alongside of man, for between the Creator and the creature there is no gradual transition. One could then go on to say with Arius that in time and status He transcended the whole world, that He was the first among created creatures, and that He was superior to them all in position and in honor. But Christ thus remains a creature. There was a time when He did not exist, and it is in time that He, like every other creature, was called into existence by God.

In the attempt, however, to hold to the unity of God and at the same time to grant the person of Christ the place of, honor proper to Him, it is easy to fail into another error, the error named after its foremost proponent, Sabellius. While Arius, so to speak, identified the being of the Godhead with the person of the Father, Sabellius sacrificed all three of the persons to the being of the Godhead. According to His teaching, the three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are not eternal realities, contained in the being of the Godhead, but they are forms and manifestations in which the one Divine Being manifests Himself successively in the course of the centuries: namely, in the Old

Testament, in the earthly sojourn of Christ, and after Pentecost. Both heresies have throughout the centuries found their adherents. The so-called Groningen Theologie, for instance, renewed essentially the doctrine of Arius, and Modern Theology at first walked in the way of Sabellius.

It required much prayer and much struggle for the church to take the right way through all these heresies, the more so because each of them was modified and mingled with all sorts of departures and variations. But under the leadership of great men, eminent by reason of their piety as well as their power of thought, and therefore justly called fathers of the church, that church remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles. At the Synod of Nicea in 325 the church confessed its faith in the one God, the Father, the Almighty, creator of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was begotten by the Father as the only-begotten, that is, out of the being of God, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things in heaven and earth were made, and in the Holy Spirit.

Very significant as this Nicean result was it by no means put a stop to the doctrinal disputes. On the contrary, the confession of Nicea gave opportunity for new questions and different answers. For, although the relationship of Christ to the being of God and to the world of men was now determined in the sense that in His person He shared in both, and that He was in His own person both God and man, the question would not down as to the nature of that relationship between those two natures in one person. In the answer to that question, too, various ways were taken.

Nestorius concluded that if there were two natures in Christ, there also had to be two persons, two selves, which could only be made one by some moral tie such as that which obtains in the marriage of a man and a woman. And Eutyches, proceeding from a like identification of person and nature, came to the conclusion that if in Christ there was but one person, one self, present, then the two natures had to be so mingled and welded together that only one nature, a Divine-human one, would emerge from the blending. In Nestorius the distinction of the natures was maintained at the cost of the unity of the person; in Eutyches the unity of the person was maintained at the cost of the duality of the natures.

After a long and vehement struggle, however, the church got beyond these disputes. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 it stated that the one person of Christ consisted of two natures, unchanged and unmingled (against Eutyches), and not separated nor divided (against Nestorius), and that these natures existed alongside of each other, having their unity in the one person. With this decision which, later, at the Synod of Constantinople in 680 was amplified and completed on one specific point, the century-long struggle about the person of Christ came to an end. In these disputes the church had preserved the essence of Christianity, the absolute character of the Christian religion, and thus also its own independence.

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It is of course self-evident that this confession of Nicea and Chalcedon may not lay claim to infallibility. The terms of which the church and its theology make use, such as person, nature, unity of substance, and the like, are not found in Scripture, but are the product of reflection which Christianity gradually had to devote to this mystery of salvation., The church was compelled to do this

reflecting by the heresies which loomed up on all sides, both within the church and outside of it. All those expressions and statements which are employed in the confession of the church and in the language of theology are not designed to explain the mystery which in this matter confronts it, but rather to maintain it pure and unviolated over against those who would weaken or deny it. The incarnation of the Word is not a problem which we must solve, or can solve, but a wonderful fact, rather, which we gratefully confess in such a way as God Himself presents it to us in His Word.

But, understood in this way, the confession which the church fixed at Nicea and Chalcedon is of great value. There have been many, and there still are many, who look down upon the doctrine of the two natures from a lofty vantage point, and try to supplant it by other words and phrases. What difference does it really make, they begin by saying, whether we agree with this doctrine or not? What matters is that we ourselves possess the person of Christ, He who stands high and exalted above this awkward confession. But before long these same persons begin introducing words and terms themselves in order to describe the person of Christ whom they accept. Nobody can escape from this situation, for what we do not know we cannot claim to possess. If we believe that we have the Christ, that we have communion with Him, that we are His own, then such belief must be confessed with the mouth and be spoken in words, terms, expressions, and descriptions of some kind or other. And then history has taught that the terms of the attackers of the Doctrine of Two Natures are far poorer in worth and force, and that they often, indeed, involve doing injustice to the incarnation as Scripture explains it to us.

In modern times, for instance, there are many who think of the Doctrine of Two Natures as the acme of unreasonableness and who

in their minds form an entirely different picture of the person of Christ. They cannot deny that there is something in Christ which differentiates Him from all men and raises Him above them all. But this Divine element which they recognize in Christ they regard not as a partaking of the Divine nature itself, but as a Divine endowment or strength granted to Christ in a particularly high degree. They tend to say, accordingly, that there are two sides to Christ, a Divine and a human side; or that He can be looked at from two points of view; or that He lived in two successive states, that of humiliation and that of exaltation; or that He, although human, by His preaching of the Word of God and the founding of His kingdom, nevertheless was the extraordinary and perfect vehicle of God's revelation and so has obtained for us the value of God. But any unprejudiced reader will feel that these representations are simply so many modifications in the language of the church not merely, but also that they make something of the person of Christ other than that which the church at all times on the basis of the testimony of the apostles has confessed.

After all, Divine gifts and powers are in a certain sense given to everyone, for all good and perfect gifts come down from the Father of lights. And even the unusual gifts, such as were the portion of the prophets, for example, do not raise these prophets above the plane of human beings. Prophets and apostles were men of like passions as we have. If Christ therefore received no more than extraordinary gifts and powers, He was no more than a human being, and then there can be no such thing as an incarnation of the Word in Him. But then He cannot, as others nevertheless maintain, by virtue of His resurrection and ascension be raised to the being of God, or have obtained the value or worth of God for us. The separation between God and man is not a gradual difference but a deep gulf. The relationship is that of Creator and creature, and the creature from

the nature of his being can never become Creator, nor have the significance and worth for us human beings of the Creator, on whom we are absolutely dependent.

It is remarkable, therefore, that some in modern times, after having compared all these newer representations concerning the person of Christ with the teaching of the church and of Scripture, have come to the honest conclusion that in the last analysis the doctrine of the church does most justice to the doctrine of Scripture. The teaching that Christ was God and man in one person is not a product of heathen philosophy but is based on the apostolic witness.

This certainly is the mystery of salvation that He who was Himself with God in the beginning and was God (John 1:1), who was in the form of God and did not think it robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6), who was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3), in the fulness of time became flesh (John 1:14), was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), humbled Himself, having taken on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7).

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Christ was God, and is God, and will forever remain God. He was not the Father, nor the Spirit, but the Son, the own, only-begotten, beloved Son of the Father. And it was not the Divine being, neither the Father nor the Spirit, but the person of the Son who became man in the fulness of time. And when He became man and as man went about on earth, even when He agonized in Gethsemane and hung on the cross, He remained God's own Son in whom the Father was well pleased (had all His pleasure). It is true, of course, as the apostle says, that Christ, being in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation and emptied

Himself (Phil. 2:6-7). But it is a mistake to take this to mean, as some do, that Christ, in His incarnation, in the state of humiliation, completely or partly divested Himself of His Divinity, laid aside His Divine attributes, and thereupon in the state of exaltation gradually assumed them again. For how could this be, since God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), and as the Immutable One in Himself far transcends all becoming and change? No, even when He became what He was not, He remained what He was, the Only-Begotten of the Father. But it is true that the Apostle says that in this sense Christ made Himself of no reputation: being in the form of God, He assumed the form of a man and a servant. One can express it humanly and simply in this way: before His incarnation Christ was equal with the Father not alone in essence and attributes, but He had also the form of God. He looked like God, He was the brightness of His glory, and the expressed image of His person. Had anyone been able to see Him, he would immediately have recognized God. But this changed at His incarnation. Then He took on the form of a human being, the form of a servant. Whoever looked at Him now could no longer recognize in Him the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, except by the eye of faith. He had laid aside His Divine form and brightness. He hid His Divine nature behind the form of a servant. On earth He was and He looked like one of us.

The incarnation therefore also implies in the second place that He who remained what He was also became what He was not. He became this at a point in time, at a particular moment in history, at that hour when the Holy Spirit came over Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). But all the same this incarnation was prepared for during the centuries.

If we are to understand the incarnation aright, we can say that the generation of the Son and the creation of the world were preparatory

to the incarnation of the Word. This is not at all to say that the generation and the creation already contain the incarnation. For Scripture always relates the incarnation of the Son to the redemption from sin and the accomplishment of salvation.²⁵ But the generation and creation, especially also the creation of man in the image of God, both teach that God is sharable, in an absolute sense within, and in a relative sense outside of, the Divine being. If this were not the case, there would not be any possibility of an incarnation of God. Whoever thinks the incarnation of God impossible in principle also denies the creation of the world and the generation of the Son. And whoever acknowledges the creation and generation can have no objection in principle to the incarnation of God in human nature.

More directly the incarnation of the Word was prepared for in the revelation which began immediately after the fall, continued in Israel's history, and reached its climax in the blessing of Mary. The Old Testament is a constantly closer approximation of God to man with a view, in the fulness of time, to making perpetual dwelling in him.

Since the Son of God, who took on human nature in Mary, had existed before that time, and from eternity, as the person of the Son, His conception in Mary's womb did not take place through the will of the flesh nor the will of the man, but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. It is true that the incarnation is linked with the preceding revelation and completes it, but it is not itself a product of nature or of humanity. It is a work of God, a revelation, the highest revelation. Just as it was the Father who sent His Son into the world, and the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary, so it was the Son Himself who took of our flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). The incarnation was His own work; He was not passive in regard to it. He became flesh by His own will and His own deed. Therefore He sets aside the

will of the flesh and the will of the man, and prepares a human nature for Himself in Mary's womb through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

That human nature did not exist beforehand. It was not brought down with Christ from heaven and borne into Mary from the outside and, so to speak, conducted through her body. The Anabaptists teach this in order to hold to the sinlessness of the human nature in Christ. But in taking this stand, they are following in the example of the ancient gnosticism, and proceed from the idea that flesh and matter are in themselves sinful. But in the incarnation, also, Scripture holds to the goodness of creation and to the Divine origin of matter.

Christ took His human nature from Mary.²⁶ So far as the flesh is concerned, He is from David and the fathers.²⁷ Therefore this nature in Him is a true and perfect human nature, like ours in all things, sin excepted.²⁸ Nothing human was strange to Christ. The denial of the coming of Christ in the flesh is the beginning of the antichrist (1 John 2:22).

Just as the human nature of Christ did not exist before the conception in Mary, so it did not exist for sometime before, nor for some time after, in a state of separation from Christ. The seed conceived in Mary, and the child that was born of her, did not first grow up independently into a man, into a person, a self, in order then to be assumed by the Christ and united with Himself. This heresy, too, had its supporters in earlier and later times, but Scripture knows nothing of it. That holy thing which was conceived in Mary's womb was from the beginning the Son of God and from the beginning He bore that name (Luke 1:35). The Word did not later take a human being unto Himself, but *became* flesh (John 1:14). And therefore the Christian church in its confession said that the person of the Son did

not assume a human person but a human nature, rather. Only in that way can the duality of the natures and the unity of the person be maintained.

For — and this is the third point which requires our attention in this matter — even though Scripture states as plainly as possible that Christ was the Word and that He became flesh, that according to the flesh He was from the fathers but that according to His essence He is God over all, blessed forever, still in that Christ it always presents *one* person to us. It is always the same Self that speaks and acts in Christ. The child which is born bears the name of the mighty God, the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6). David's Son is at the same time David's Lord. The same one who came down is the one who ascended up far above all heavens (Eph. 4:10). He who according to the flesh is from the fathers is according to His essence God over all, blessed forever (Rom.9:5). Though going about on earth He was and He remained in heaven, in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18 and 3:13). Born in time and living in time He nevertheless is before Abraham (John 8:58). The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him (Col. 2:9).

In short, to one and the same subject, one and the same person, Divine and human attributes and works, eternity and time, omnipresence and limitation, creative omnipotence and creaturely weakness are ascribed. This being so, the union of the two natures in Christ cannot have been that of two persons. Two persons can through love be intimately united with each other, it is true, but they can never become one person, one self. In fact, love implies two persons and effects only a mystical and ethical unity. If the union of the Son of God with human nature were of this character it could at best be distinguished in degree but not in kind from that which unites God with His creatures, specifically with His children. But

Christ occupies a unique position. He did not unite Himself in a moral way with man, and did not take an existing human being up into His fellowship, but He prepared a human nature for Himself in Mary's womb and *became* a human being and a servant. just as a human being can go from one state of life to another, and can live at the same time or in succession in two spheres of life, so, by way of analogy, Christ, who was in the form of God, went about on earth in the form of a servant. The union which in His incarnation came to be effected was not a moral union between two persons, but a union of two natures in the same person. Man and woman, no matter how intimately united in love, remain two persons. God and man, although united by the most intimate love, remain different in essence. But in Christ man is the same subject as the Word which in the beginning was with God and Himself was God. This is a unique, incomparable, and unfathomable union of God and man. And the beginning and end of all wisdom is this: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

In this union Christ in the unity of His person commands all the attributes and powers which are proper to both natures. Some have tried to effect a still stronger and closer union of the two natures by teaching that the two natures, immediately at the incarnation, were welded into one Divine-human nature, or that the Divine nature divested itself of its characteristics and condescended to the limitation of human nature, or that the human nature lost its properties and received those of the Divine nature (be it all of them, or just some of them such as omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and quickening power.) But the Reformed confession has always repudiated and attacked such a welding of two natures into one and such a communication of the properties of the one nature to the other. It was a view of the two natures which resulted in

a mingling and confusion of them and so in a pantheistic denial of the difference in essence between God and man, Creator and creature.

True, there is an intimate relationship between the two natures and their properties and powers. But it is a relationship which comes into being in the unity of the person. A stronger, deeper, more intimate union is inconceivable. Just as — to make a comparison and not an equating of the two — soul and body are united in one person and nevertheless remain distinguished from each other in essence and properties, so in Christ the same person is the subject of both natures. The difference between soul and body is the assumption and condition of the inner union of the two in one and the same human being, and so too the difference between the Divine and the human nature is the condition and basis of their union in Christ. The welding of the two natures into one and the communication of the properties from one to another make for no more intimate relationship, but make for a mingling or fusion, and, in point of fact, impoverish the fulness which is in Christ. They subtract either from the Divine, or from the human, nature, or from both natures, and weaken the word of the Scripture that in Him, that is, in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells (Col. 2:9 and 1:19). That fulness is maintained only if both natures are distinguished from each other, communicating their properties and attributes not to each other, but placing them, rather, in the service of the one person. So it is always the same rich Christ who in His humiliation and exaltation commands the properties and powers of both natures and who precisely by that means can bring those works to pass, which, as the works of the Mediator, are distinguished on the one hand from the works of God and on the other hand from the works of man, and which take a unique place in the history of the world.

By this Doctrine of the Two Natures one has the advantage that everything which Scripture says of the person of Christ and everything it ascribes to Him comes into its own. On the one hand He then is and remains the one and eternal Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit has made all things, sustains and governs them,²⁹ and who therefore may remain the object of our worship. He was such an object already in the days of the apostles,³⁰ even as He was then, and now yet is, the object of the faith and confidence of all His disciples.³¹ But He cannot and He may not be both of these things unless He is true God, for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God and Him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10). The basis for the religious worship of Christ can be only His Divine nature, so that whoever denies this and yet maintains the worship becomes guilty of deifying the creature and of idolatry. The Divinity of Christ is not an abstract doctrine but something which is of the highest importance for the life of the church.

On the other hand, the Christ became very man and perfect man, like us in all things, sin excepted. He was infant, child, youth, and man, and He grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40 and 52). All this is not appearance and illusion merely, as those must say who hold that the Divine properties belong to the human nature, but it is the full truth. There was in Christ a gradual development, a progressive growth in body, in the powers of the soul, in favor with God and man. The gifts of the Spirit were not given to Him all at once, but successively in ever greater measure. There were things which He had to learn, and which at first He did not know (Mark 13:32 and Acts 1:7). Even though He was in possession of the notable-to-sin state of being, there was in Him, because of His weak human nature, the possibility of being tempted and of suffering and dying. So long as He was on the earth He was not according to His human nature in heaven, and hence He too did not live by sight but

by faith. He fought and He suffered, and in all this He clung fixedly to the word and the promise of God. Thus He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, continually established Himself in obedience, and so sanctified Himself.³² And in this at the same time He left us an example, and became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9).

Notes

1. 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 1:11; 2:22; and 1 John 3:5.
2. Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14.
3. Phil. 2:6; Heb. 5:7-8; 12:2 and 13:12.
4. Rom. 3:25; 5:9; and Col. 1:20.
5. Acts 2:32, 33, 36; 5:30, 31; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:20; Phil. 2:9; and other passages.
6. John 20:31; 1 John 2:22; 4:15; 5:5.
7. Matt. 1:1, 18; 16:20; Mark 1:1; John 1:17; and 17:3.
8. Matt. 8:2, 6, 21; 15:22; 17:15; and other passages.
9. Matt. 14:28, 30; 26:22; 11:3; 21:15, 16, 17, and 21.
10. Luke 1:43; 2:11, 38; 7:13, 31; 10:1; 11:39; 17:6; and John 4:1; 6:23; 11:2; 20:2, 13, 18, 25, and 28; and so on.
11. Matt. 7:21; 12:8; 21:3; 22:43-45; Mark 5:19; and John 13:14.
12. Matt. 21:4, 5; 13:35; 24:42ff.; and 25:34ff.
13. Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; and Phil. 2:11.
14. Matt. 4:2; John 11:35; and 19:28; and elsewhere.
15. Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; and 10:7, 9.
16. Matt. 28:20; Eph. 1:23; and 4:10.
17. Acts 1:24; 7:59; 16:13; Rom. 10:13 and elsewhere.
18. Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22; Rev. 1:4; and 19:16.
19. Isa. 43:3, 11; 45:15; Jer. 14:8; and Hos. 13:4.
20. 1 Tim. 1:11; 2:3; Titus 1:3; and 2:10.

21. 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; and 3:18.
22. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; and Heb. 1:3.
23. Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 1:14; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:6; and Col. 1:13.
24. 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2; and Rev. 1:4-6.
25. Matt. 1:21; John 3:16; Rom. 8:3; and Gal. 4:4, 5.
26. Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:7; and Gal. 4:4.
27. Acts 2:30; Rom. 1:3; and 9:5.
28. Heb. 2:14, 17; and 4:15.
29. John 1:3; Col. 1:15, 16; and Heb. 1:2.
30. John 14:13; Acts 7:59; 9:13; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9; and Heb. 1:6.
31. John 14:1; 17:3; Rom. 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 3:12; 5:23; Col. 1:27; and other passages.
32. John 17:19 and Heb. 5:8 and 9.

The Fall

fol:

1. Meaning of Genesis 3
2. Genesis 3 in the Old and New Testaments
3. The Fall and the Theory of Evolution
4. The Character of the Fall

The question concerning the origin, the age and the written record of the history of the Fall in Genesis 3 need not be discussed here. For in the first place, science can never reach to the oldest origins and the ultimate destinies of humanity, and historical and critical inquiry will never be able to prove either the veracity or the unveracity of this history. And in the second place, exactly as it now lies before us, this history has already formed for centuries a portion of holy Scripture, an indispensable element in the organism of the revelation of salvation, and as such has been accepted in faith by the Hebrew congregation (Jewish people), by Christ, by the apostles, and by the whole Christian church.

1. Meaning of Genesis 3:

That Genesis 3 gives us an account of the fall of man, of the loss of his primitive innocence and of the misery, particularly death, to which he has since been subjected, cannot reasonably be denied. The opinion of the Ophites, Kant, Schiller, Hegel, etc., that Genesis 3 relates the awakening of man to self-consciousness and personality, and therefore does not tell us of a fall, but a marked progression, is

disputed by the name which the forbidden tree bears, as indicating to man not merely a tree of knowledge in the ordinary way, but quite specially a tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3 is not in the least meant to relate to us how man obtained the idea of his nakedness and sexual passions, and from a state of childlike innocence changed in this respect to manlike maturity (Eerdman's *De Beteekenis van het Paradijsverhaal*, *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1905, 485-511). For according to Genesis, man was created full-grown, received a wife immediately as helpmeet, and at the same time saw himself allotted the task of multiplying and replenishing the earth. Moreover, the idea that sexual desire is something sinful and deserves punishment was entirely foreign to ancient Israel.

Finally, the interpretation of Wellhausen (*Geschichte Israels*, 1878, 344) cannot be accepted, that man in Genesis 3 should obtain "die intellektuelle Welterkenntniss, die metaphysische Erkenntniss der Dinge in ihrem Zusammenhange, ihrem Werth oder Unwerth, ihrem Nutzen oder Schaden" ("the intellectual knowledge of the world, the metaphysical knowledge of things in their connection, their worth or unworth, their utility or hurtfulness"). For in the first place, according to Gen, this was man's peculiar province from the beginning; he received indeed the vocation to subdue the earth, to keep and till the ground, to give the animals their names. And in the second place, the acquiring of this knowledge among the Israelites, who esteemed practical wisdom so highly, is difficult to represent as a fall, or as a punishment deserved for disobedience.

There is no other explanation possible of Genesis 3 than that it is the narration of a fall, which consists in the transgression of an explicit command of God, thus bearing a moral significance, and therefore

followed by repentance, shame, fear and punishment. The context of the chapter places this interpretation beyond all doubt, for before his fall man is represented as a creature made after God's image and receiving paradise as a dwelling-place, and after the fall he is sent into a rough world, is condemned to a life of labor and sorrow, and increases more and more in sin until the judgment of the Flood.

2. Genesis 3 in the Old and the New Testaments:

It is indeed remarkable how very seldom the Old Testament refers to this history of the Fall. This is not a sufficient reason for pronouncing it of later origin, for the same peculiarity presents itself at the time when, according to all criticism, it was recorded in literature. Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs never quote it; at the most, allusions may be found to it in Hosea 6:7 and Ecclesiastes 7:29; and even Jesus and His apostles in the New Testament very seldom appeal to Genesis 3 (John 8:44; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14). But it may be considered that the Prophets, Psalms and Proverbs only mention special facts of the past by way of exception, that the apostles even hardly ever quote the words and deeds of Jesus, and that all lived at a time when revelation itself was still proceeding and did not lie before them as a complete whole. With us it is quite a different matter; we are in a certain sense outside revelation, make it a subject of our study and meditation, try to discover the unity which holds all its parts together, and devote our special interest to Adam as a figure and counterpart of Christ. The creation and fall of man occupy therefore a much broader place in the province of our thoughts than they did among the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments.

Nevertheless, the Fall is the silent hypothesis of the whole Biblical doctrine of sin and redemption; it does not rest only on a few vague

passages, but forms an indispensable element in the revelation of salvation. The whole contemplation of man and humanity, of Nature and history, of ethical and physical evil, of redemption and the way in which to obtain it, is connected in Scripture with a Fall, such as Genesis 3 relates to us. Sin, for example, is common to all men (1 Kings 8:46; Psalms 14:3; 130:3; 143:2), and to every man from his conception (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Psalms 51:7). It arouses God's anger and deserves all kinds of punishment, not only of an ethical but of a physical nature (Genesis 3:14-19; 4:14; 6:7,13; 11:8; Leviticus 26:14 f; Deuteronomy 28:15; Psalms 90:7, etc.); the whole of Scripture proceeds from the thought that sin and death are connected in the closest degree, as are also obedience and life. In the new heaven and new earth all suffering ceases with sin (Revelation 21:4). Therefore redemption is possible only in the way of forgiveness (Psalms 32:1; Isaiah 43:25, etc.), and circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:16; Jeremiah 4:4), and this includes, further, life, joy, peace, salvation. When Paul in Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22 indicates Adam as the origin of sin and death, and Christ as the source of righteousness and life, he develops no ideas which are contrary to the organism of revelation or which might be neglected without loss; he merely combines and formulates the data which are explicitly or silently contained in it.

3. The Fall and the Theory of Evolution:

Tradition does little toward the confirmation and elucidation of the Biblical narrative of the Fall. The study of mythology is still too little advanced to determine the ideal or historical value which may be contained in the legend of a Golden Age, in many people's obsequious honoring of the serpent, in the equally widespread belief in a tree of life. The Babylonian representation also (a seal on which a man and woman, seated, are figured as plucking fruit from a tree,

while a serpent curls up behind the woman as if whispering in her ear), which G. Smith, Lenormant and Friedrich Delitzsch compare with the Paradise narrative, shows no similarity on nearer view (A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients*², Leipzig, 1906, 203). Indirectly, however, a very powerful witness for the fall of man is furnished by the whole empirical condition of the world and humanity. For a world, such as we know it, full of unrighteousness and sorrow, cannot be explained without the acceptance of such a fact. He who holds fast to the witness of Scripture and conscience to sin as sin (as *anomia*) cannot deduce it from creation, but must accept the conclusion that it began with a transgression of God's command and thus with a deed of the will. Pythagoras, Plato, Kant, Schelling, Baader have all understood and acknowledged this with more or less clearness. He who denies the Fall must explain sin as a necessity which has its origin in the Creation, in the nature of things, and therefore in God Himself; he justifies man but accuses God, misrepresents the character of sin and makes it everlasting and indefeasible. For if there has not been a fall into sin, there is no redemption of sin possible; sin then loses its merely ethical significance, becomes a trait of the nature of man, and is inexterminable.

This comes out, in later years, in the many endeavors to unite the Fall with the doctrine of evolution (compare Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*², 1905; A. S. Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth*, 1908; W. E. Orchard, *Modern Theories of Sin*, 1909; Francis J. Hall, *Evolution and the Fall*, 1910). All these endeavors lead to setting on one side the objective standard of sin, which is the law of God, and determining the nature and importance of sin subjectively by the feeling of guilt, which in its turn again depends on the knowledge of and the love for the moral ideal, and itself forms an important factor in moral progress. It is true that the strength of all

these endeavors is drawn from theory of the descent of man from the animal. But as to this theory, it is worthy of notice: (1) that it is up to the present day a hypothesis, and is proved by no single observation, whether direct or indirect; (2) that the fossils of prehistoric men, found in Germany, Belgium, France and elsewhere have demonstrated the low degree of culture in which these men have lived, but in no sense their dissimilarity with mankind of today (W. Branca, *Der Stand unserer Kenntnisse vom fossilen Menschen*, Leipzig, 1910); (3) that the uncivilized and prehistoric man may be as little identified with the first man as the unjustly so-called nature-people and children under age; (4) that the oldest history of the human race, which has become known through the discoveries at Babylon in the last century, was not that of a state of barbarism, but of high and rich culture (D. Gath Whitley, "What was the Primitive Condition of Man?" *Princeton Theol. Review*, October, 1906; J. Orr, *God's Image in Man*, 1906); (5) that the acceptance of theory of descent as a universal and unlimited rule leads to the denial of the unity of the human race, in a physical and also in an intellectual, moral and religious sense. For it may be possible, even in the school of Darwin, to maintain the unity of the human race so long a time as tradition exercises its influence on the habit of mind; but theory itself undermines its foundation and marks it as an arbitrary opinion. From the standpoint of evolution, there is not only no reason to hold to the "of one blood" of Acts 17:26 the King James Version, but there has never even been a first man; the transition from animal to man was so slow and successive, that the essential distinction fails to be seen. And with the effacing of this boundary, the unity of the moral ideal, of religion, of the laws of thought and of truth, fails also; theory of evolution expels the absolute everywhere and leads necessarily to psychologism, relativism, pragmatism and even to pluralism, which is literally polytheism in a religious sense. The unity of the human race, on the other hand, as it is taught in holy Scripture, is not an

indifferent physical question, but an important intellectual, moral and religious one; it is a "postulate" of the whole history of civilization, and expressly or silently accepted by nearly all historians. And conscience bears witness to it, in so far as all men show the work of the moral law written in their hearts, and their thoughts accuse or excuse one another (Romans 2:15); it shows back to the Fall as an "Urthatsache der Geschichte."

4. The Character of the Fall:

What the condition and history of the human race could hardly lead us to imagine, holy Scripture relates to us as a tragic fact in its first pages. The first man was created by God after His own image, not therefore in brutish unconsciousness or childlike naivete, but in a state of bodily and spiritual maturity, with understanding and reason, with knowledge and speech, with knowledge especially of God and His law. Then was given to him moreover a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This command was not contained in the moral law as such; it was not a natural but a positive commandment; it rested entirely and only on God's will and must be obeyed exclusively for this reason. It placed before man the choice, whether he would be faithful and obedient to God's word and would leave to Him alone the decision as to what is good or evil, or whether he would reserve to himself the right arbitrarily to decide what is good or evil. Thus the question was: Shall theonomy or autonomy be the way to happiness? On this account also the tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It did not bear this name in the sense that man might obtain from it the empirical knowledge of good and evil, for by his transgression he in truth lost the empirical knowledge of good. But the tree was so named, because man, by eating of it and so transgressing God's commandment, arrogated to himself "die Fahigkeit zur selbstandigen Wahl der Mittel, durch die

man sein Gluck schaffen will": "the capacity of independent choice of the means by which he would attain his happiness" (Koberle, *Sunde und Gnade im relig. Leben des Volkes Israel bis auf Christenrum*, 1905, 64). Theonomy, as obedience to God from free love, includes as such the idea and the possibility of autonomy, therefore that of antinomy also.

But it is the free act and therefore the guilt of man that has changed the possibility into reality. For the mind, there remains here an insoluble problem, as much in the question, why God allowed this Fall to take place, as in the other, how man, created in the likeness of God, could and did fall. There is a great deal of truth in the often-expressed thought, that we can give no account of the origin of sin, because it is not logical, and does not result as a conclusion drawn from two premises. But facts are brutal. What seems logically impossible often exists in reality. The laws of moral life are different from those of thought and from those also of mechanical nature. The narrative in Genesis 3, in any case, is psychologically faithful in the highest degree. For the same way as it appears there in the first man, it repeatedly takes place among ourselves (James 1:14-15). Furthermore we ought to allow God to justify Himself. The course of revelation discovers to faith how, through all the ages, He holds sin in its entire development in His own almighty hands, and works through grace for a consummation in which, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He will gather together in one all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). (J. Orr, *Sin as a Problem of Today*, London, 1910.)

Herman Bavinck, from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

DEATH

(maweth; thanatos):

PHYSIOLOGICAL AND FIGURATIVE VIEW

The word "Death" is used in the sense of (1) the process of dying (Genesis 21:16); (2) the period of decease (Genesis 27:7); (3) as a possible synonym for poison (2 Kings 4:40); (4) as descriptive of person in danger of perishing (Judges 15:18; "in deaths oft" 2 Corinthians 11:23). In this sense the shadow of death is a familiar expression in Job, the Psalms and the Prophets; (5) death is personified in 1 Corinthians 15:55 and Revelation 20:14. Deliverance from this catastrophe is called the "issues from death" (Psalms 68:20 the King James Version; translated "escape" in the Revised Version (British and American)). Judicial execution, "putting to death," is mentioned 39 times in the Levitical Law.

Figuratively: Death is the loss of spiritual life as in Romans 8:6; and the final state of the unregenerate is called the "second death" in Revelation 20:14.

Alex. Macalister

THEOLOGICAL VIEW

1. Conception of Sin and Death:

According to Genesis 2:17, God gave to man, created in His own image, the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and added thereto the warning, "in the day that thou eatest

thereof, thou shalt surely die." Though not exclusively, reference is certainly made here in the first place to bodily death. Yet because death by no means came upon Adam and Eve on the day of their transgression, but took place hundreds of years later, the expression, "in the day that," must be conceived in a wider sense, or the delay of death must be attributed to the entering-in of mercy (Genesis 3:15). However this may be, Genesis 2:17 places a close connection between man's death and his transgression of God's commandment, thereby attaching to death a religious and ethical significance, and on the other hand makes the life of man dependent on his obedience to God. This religious-ethical nature of life and death is not only decidedly and clearly expressed in Genesis 2, but it is the fundamental thought of the whole of Scripture and forms an essential element in the revelations of salvation. The theologians of early and more recent times, who have denied the spiritual significance of death and have separated the connection between ethical and physical life, usually endeavor to trace back their opinions to Scripture; and those passages which undoubtedly see in death a punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17; John 8:44; Romans 5:12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21), they take as individual opinions, which form no part of the organism of revelation. But this endeavor shuts out the organic character of the revelation of salvation. It is true that death in Holy Scripture is often measured by the weakness and frailty of human nature (Genesis 3:19; Job 14:1,12; Psalms 39:5-6; 90:5; 103:14-15; Ecclesiastes 3:20, etc.). Death is seldom connected with the transgression of the first man either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, or mentioned as a specified punishment for sin (John 8:44; Romans 5:12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21; James 1:15); for the most part it is portrayed as something natural (Genesis 5:5; 9:29; 15:15; 25:8, etc.), a long life being presented as a blessing in contrast to death in the midst of days as a disaster and a judgment (Psalms 102:23 f; Isaiah 65:20). But all this is not contrary to the idea that

death is a consequence of, and a punishment for, sin. Daily, everyone who agrees with Scripture that death is held out as a punishment for sin, speaks in the same way. Death, though come into the world through sin, is nevertheless at the same time a consequence of man's physical and frail existence now; it could therefore be threatened as a punishment to man, because he was taken out of the ground and was made a living soul, of the earth earthy (Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:45,47). If he had remained obedient, he would not have returned to dust (Genesis 3:19), but have pressed forward on the path of spiritual development (1 Corinthians 15:46,51); his return to dust was possible simply because he was made from dust (see [ADAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT](#)). Thus, although death is in this way a consequence of sin, yet a long life is felt to be a blessing and death a disaster and a judgment, above all when man is taken away in the bloom of his youth or the strength of his years. There is nothing strange, therefore, in the manner in which Scripture speaks about death; we all express ourselves daily in the same way, though we at the same time consider it as the wages of sin. Beneath the ordinary, everyday expressions about death lies the deep consciousness that it is unnatural and contrary to our innermost being.

2. The Meaning of Death:

This is decidedly expressed in Scripture much more so even than among ourselves. For we are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea, that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness, and is nowhere found in the Old Testament. The whole man dies, when in death the spirit (Psalms 146:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7), or soul (Genesis 35:18; 2 Samuel 1:9; 1 Kings 17:21; Jonah 4:3), goes out of a man. Not only his body, but his soul also returns to a state of death and belongs to the nether-world; therefore the Old Testament can speak

of a death of one's soul (Genesis 37:21 (Hebrew); Numbers 23:10 m; Deuteronomy 22:21; Judges 16:30; Job 36:14; Psalms 78:50), and of defilement by coming in contact with a dead body (Leviticus 19:28; 21:11; 22:4; Numbers 5:2; 6:6; 9:6; 19:10 ff; Deuteronomy 14:1; Haggai 2:13). This death of man is not annihilation, however, but a deprivation of all that makes for life on earth. The Sheol (she'ol) is in contrast with the land of the living in every respect (Job 28:13; Proverbs 15:24; Ezekiel 26:20; 32:23); it is an abode of darkness and the shadow of death (Job 10:21-22; Psalms 88:12; 143:3), a place of destruction, yea destruction itself (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalms 88:11; Proverbs 27:20), without any order (Job 10:22), a land of rest, of silence, of oblivion (Job 3:13,17-18; Psalms 94:17; 115:17), where God and man are no longer to be seen (Isaiah 38:11), God no longer praised or thanked (Psalms 6:5; 115:17), His perfections no more acknowledged (Psalms 88:10-13; Isaiah 38:18-19), His wonders not contemplated (Psalms 88:12), where the dead are unconscious, do no more work, take no account of anything, possess no knowledge nor wisdom, neither have any more a portion in anything that is done under the sun (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,10). The dead ("the Shades" the Revised Version, margin; compare article DECEASE, IN NEW TESTAMENT) are asleep (Job 26:5; Proverbs 2:18; 9:18; 21:6; Psalms 88:11; Isaiah 14:9), weakened (Isaiah 14:10) and without strength (Psalms 88:4).

3. Light in the Darkness:

The dread of death was felt much more deeply therefore by the Israelites than by ourselves. Death to them was separation from all that they loved, from God, from His service, from His law, from His people, from His land, from all the rich companionship in which they lived. But now in this darkness appears the light of the revelation of salvation from on high. The God of Israel is the living God and the

fountain of all life (Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; Psalms 36:9). He is the Creator of heaven and earth, whose power knows no bounds and whose dominion extends over life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalms 90:3). He gave life to man (Genesis 1:26; 2:7), and creates and sustains every man still (Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14; Psalms 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:7). He connects life with the keeping of His law and appoints death for the transgression of it (Genesis 2:17; Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:20; 32:47). He lives in heaven, but is present also by His spirit in Sheol (Psalms 139:7-8). Sheol and Abaddon are open to Him even as the hearts of the children of men (Job 26:6; 38:17; Proverbs 15:11). He kills and makes alive, brings down into Sheol and raises from thence again (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). He lengthens life for those who keep His commandments (Exodus 20:12; Job 5:26), gives escape from death, can deliver when death menaces (Psalms 68:20; Isaiah 38:5; Jeremiah 15:20; Daniel 3:26), can take Enoch and Elijah to Himself without dying (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), can restore the dead to life (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:34; 13:21). He can even bring death wholly to nothing and completely triumph over its power by rising from the dead (Job 14:13-15; 19:25-27; Hosea 6:2; 13:14; Isaiah 25:8; 26:19; Ezekiel 37:11-12; Daniel 12:2).

4. Spiritual Significance:

This revelation by degrees rejects the old contrast between life on earth and the disconsolate existence after death, in the dark place of Sheol, and puts another in its place. The physical contrast between life and death gradually makes way for the moral and spiritual difference between a life spent in the fear of the Lord, and a life in the service of sin. The man who serves God is alive (Genesis 2:17); life is involved in the keeping of His commandments (Leviticus 18:5;

Deuteronomy 30:20); His word is life (Deuteronomy 8:3; 32:47). Life is still for the most part understood to mean length of days (Proverbs 2:18; 3:16; 10:30; Isaiah 65:20). Nevertheless it is remarkable that Prov often mentions death and Sheol in connection with the godless (Isaiah 2:18; 5:5; 7:25; 9:18), and on the other hand only speaks of life in connection with the righteous. Wisdom, righteousness, the fear of the Lord is the way of life (Isaiah 8:22,22; 11:16; 12:6; 13:14; 14:27; 19:23). The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death (Isaiah 14:32). Blessed is he who has the Lord for his God (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12; 32:1-2; 33:12; 34:9, etc.); he is comforted in the greatest adversity (Psalms 73:25-28; Habakkuk 3:17-19), and sees a light arise for him behind physical death (Genesis 49:18; Job 14:13-15; 16:16-21; 19:25-27; Psalms 73:23-26). The godless on the contrary, although enjoying for a time much prosperity, perish and come to an end (Psalms 1:4-6; 73:18-20; Isaiah 48:22; Malachi 4:3, etc.).

The righteous of the Old Testament truly are continually occupied with the problem that the lot of man on earth often corresponds so little to his spiritual worth, but he strengthens himself with the conviction that for the righteous it will be well, and for the wicked, ill (Ecclesiastes 8:12-13; Isaiah 3:10-11). If they do not realize it in the present, they look forward to the future and hope for the day in which God's justice will extend salvation to the righteous, and His anger will be visited on the wicked in judgment. So in the Old Testament the revelation of the new covenant is prepared wherein Christ by His appearance hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). See ABOLISH . This everlasting life is already here on earth presented to man by faith, and it is his portion also in the hour of death (John 3:36; 11:25-26). On the other hand, he who lives in sin and is

disobedient to the Son of God, is in his living dead (Matthew 8:22; Luke 15:32; John 3:36; 8:24; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13); he shall never see life, but shall pass by bodily death into the second death (Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8).

5. Death in Non-Christian Religions and in Science:

This view of Scripture upon death goes much deeper than that which is found in other religions, but it nevertheless receives support from the unanimous witness of humanity with regard to its unnaturalness and dread. The so-called nature-peoples even feel that death is much more of an enigma than life; Tiele (*Inleiding tot de goddienst-artschap*, II (1900), 202, referring to Andrew Lang, *Modern Mythology*, chapter xiii) says rightly, that all peoples have the conviction that man by nature is immortal, that immortality wants no proof, but that death is a mystery and must be explained. Touching complaints arise in the hearts of all men on the frailty and vanity of life, and the whole of mankind fears death as a mysterious power. Man finds comfort in death only when he hopes it will be an end to a still more miserable life. Seneca may be taken as interpreter of some philosophers when he says: *Stultitia est timore morris mori* ("It is stupid to die through the fear of death") and some may be able, like a Socrates or a Cato, to face death calmly and courageously; what have these few to say to the millions, who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15)? Such a mystery has death remained up to the present day. It may be said with Kassowitz, Verworm and others that the "cell" is the beginning, and the old, gray man is the natural end of an uninterrupted life-development, or with Metschnikoff, that science will one day so lengthen life that it will fade away like a rose at last and death lose all its dread; death still is no less a riddle, and one which swallows up all the strength of life. When one considers, besides, that a number of

creatures, plants, trees, animals, reach a much higher age than man; that the larger half of mankind dies before or shortly after birth; that another large percentage dies in the bloom of youth or in the prime of life; that the law of the survival of the fittest is true only when the fact of the survival is taken as a proof of their fitness; that the graybeards, who, spent and decrepit, go down to the grave, form a very small number; then the enigma of death increases more and more in mysteriousness. The endeavors to bring death into connection with certain activities of the organism and to explain it by increasing weight, by growth or by fertility, have all led to shipwreck. When Weismann took refuge in the immortality of the "einzellige Protozoen," he raised a hypothesis which not only found many opponents, but which also left mortality of the "Körperplasma" an insoluble mystery (Beth, "Ueber Ursache und Zweck des Todes, Glauben und Wissen (1909), 285-304, 335-48). Thus, science certainly does not compel us to review Scripture on this point, but rather furnishes a strong proof of the mysterious majesty of death. When Pelagius, Socinus, Schleiermacher, Ritschl and a number of other theologians and philosophers separate death from its connection with sin, they are not compelled to do so by science, but are led by a defective insight into the relation between ethos and physis. Misery and death are not absolutely always consequences and punishment of a great personal transgression (Luke 13:2; John 9:3); but that they are connected with sin, we learn from the experience of every day. Who can number the victims of mammonism, alcoholism and licentiousness? Even spiritual sins exercise their influence on corporal life; envy is a rottenness of the bones (Proverbs 14:30). This connection is taught us in a great measure by Scripture, when it placed the not yet fallen man in a Paradise, where death had not yet entered, and eternal life was not yet possessed and enjoyed; when it sends fallen man, who, however, is destined for redemption, into a world full of misery and death; and

at last assigns to the wholly renewed man a new heaven and a new earth, where death, sorrow, crying or pain shall no longer exist (Revelation 21:4).

Finally, Scripture is not the book of death, but of life, of everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It tells us, in oft-repeated and unmistakable terms, of the dreaded reality of death, but it proclaims to us still more loudly the wonderful power of the life which is in Christ Jesus.

Herman Bavinck, from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

The Covenant of Grace

(Chapter 14 of *Our Reasonable Faith**)

[But who can stand in the judgment?] To that question all mankind has at all times and in all places given the answer that men, such as they are, may not appear before the face of God nor dwell in his presence. There is no one who can say or dares to say: I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin (Prov. 20:9). Everybody feels himself to be guilty and defiled, and everybody acknowledges, if not to others, at least internally to himself, that he is not what he should be. The hardened sinner has moments in which restlessness and turmoil master him; and the self-righteous in the last instance always continue hoping that God will blink at what is lacking and accept the intent for the deed.

True, there are many who try to banish these serious thoughts from their minds and plunge into life as though there were no God and no commandment. They deceive themselves with the hope that there is no God (Ps. 14:1), that He does not bother about the sins of men, so that whoever does evil is good in His sight (Mal. 2:17), that He does not remember evil nor see it (Ps. 10:11 and 94:7), or else that, as perfect Love, He may not seek out and punish the wrong (Ps. 10:14). And whoever holds to the demand of the moral law and lets the ethical ideal stand in its loftiness, can only agree that God must punish the wrong. God is love, indeed, but this glorious confession comes into its own only when love in the Divine being is understood as being a holy love in perfect harmony with justice. There is room for the grace of God only if the justice of God is first fully established.

After all, the whole history of the world gives an irrefutable testimony to this justice of God. We cannot speculate out of the world the special revelation in Christ which tells us of the love of God if we were to do that the general revelation with its benefits and blessings would be lost to us. But, if we were, but for a moment, in our thoughts to leave the revelation in Christ to one side there would remain very little ground for belief in a God of love. For if the history of the world clearly teaches us anything, it is this: that God has a quarrel with His creature. There is disagreement, separation, conflict between God and this world. God does not agree with man, and man does not agree with God. Each goes his own way, and each has his own idea and will about things. The thoughts of God are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8).

Therefore the history of the world is also a judgment of the world. No, it is not as one poet has said, *the* judgment of the world, for that will come at the end of days; and it is not judgment alone, for the earth is still full of the riches of God (Ps. 104:24). All the same, the

history of the world is a judgment, a history full of judgments, full of struggle and war, of blood and tears, calamities and afflictions. Above it are written the words which Moses once spoke when he saw the race of the Israelites dying away before his eyes: We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled (Ps. 90:7).

This testimony of history to the justice of God is confirmed by the fact that mankind has always looked for, and still looks for, a lost Paradise, for a lasting bliss, and for a redemption from all evil that oppresses it. There is in all men a need for, and a seeking after, redemption. It is just this which specifically comes to expression in religion. True, one can take the word redemption in so large a sense that it includes all the labor which men do on the earth. For when man by the world of his hands tries to supply the needs of his life, when he tries to defend himself against all kinds of antagonistic forces in nature and among men, and when in science and art he strives to subdue the whole earth, all that has also the purpose of being liberated from evil and ushered into the good.

The Divine Trinity

by Herman Bavinck

The Eternal Being reveals Himself in His triune existence even more richly and vitally than in His attributes. It is in this holy trinity that each attribute of His Being comes into its own, so to speak, gets its fullest content, and takes on its profoundest meaning. It is only when we contemplate this trinity that we know who and what God is. Only

then do we know, moreover, who God is and what He is for lost mankind. We can know this only when we know and confess Him as the Triune God of the Covenant, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In considering this part of our confession, it is particularly necessary that a tone of holy reverence and childlike awe be the characteristic of our approach and attitude. For Moses it was an awful and unforgettable hour when the Lord appeared to him in the desert in the flame of fire coming from the bramble bush. When Moses looked upon that burning fire, which burned but did not consume, from a distance, and when he wanted to hasten to the spot, the Lord restrained him and said: Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And when Moses heard that he feared greatly, hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God (Ex. 3:1-6).

Such a holy respect suits us also as we witness God revealing Himself in His word as a Triune God. For we must always remember that as we study this fact, we are not dealing with a doctrine about God, with an abstract concept, or with a scientific proposition about the nature of Divinity. We are not dealing with a human construction which we ourselves or which others have put upon the facts, and which we now try to analyze and logically to dismember. Rather, in treating of the Trinity, we are dealing with God Himself, with the one and true God, who has revealed Himself as such in His Word. It is as He said to Moses: I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). So He reveals Himself to us also in His Word and manifests Himself to us as Father, Son, and Spirit.

It is thus that the Christian church has always confessed the revelation of God as the Triune God, and accepted it as such. We find it in the Twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed. The Christian is not in

that creed saying just how he thinks about God. He is not there giving out a notion of God, nor saying that God has such and such attributes, and that He exists in this and that wise. Instead, he confesses: I believe *in* God the Father, and *in* Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and *in* the Holy Spirit: I believe in the Triune God. In confessing this the Christian gives expression to the fact that God is the living and the true God, that He is God as Father, Son, and Spirit, the God of His confidence, to whom he has wholly surrendered himself, and upon whom he rests with his whole heart. God is the God of his life and his salvation. As Father, Son, and Spirit, God has created him, redeemed him, sanctified him, and glorified him. The Christian owes everything to Him. It is his joy and comfort that he may believe *in* that God, trust Him, and expect everything from Him.

What the Christian goes on to confess about that God is not summarized by him in a number of abstract terms, but is described, rather, as a series of deeds done by God in the past, in the present, and to be done in the future. It is the deeds, the miracles, of God which constitute the confession of the Christian. What the Christian confesses in his creed is a long, a broad, and a high history. It is a history which comprises the whole world in its length and breadth, in its beginning, process, and end, in its origin, development, and destination, from the point of creation to the fulfillment of the ages. The confession of the church is a declaration of the mighty deeds of God.

Those deeds are numerous and are characterized by great diversity. But they also constitute a strict unity. They are related to each other, prepare for each other, and are interdependent. There is order and pattern, development and upward movement in it. It proceeds from creation through redemption to sanctification and glorification. The end returns to the beginning and yet is at the same time the apex

which is exalted high above the point of origin. The deeds of God form a circle which mounts upward in the form of a spiral; they represent a harmony of the horizontal and the vertical line; they move upwards and forwards at the same time.

God is the architect and builder of all those deeds, the source and the final end of them. Out of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. He is their Maker, Restorer, and Fulfiller. The unity and diversity in the works of God proceeds from and returns to the unity and diversity which exist in the Divine Being. That Being is one being, single and simple. At the same time that being is threefold in His person, in His revelation, and in His influence. The entire work of God is an unbroken whole, and nevertheless comprises the richest variety and change. The confession of the church comprehends the whole of world history. In that confession are included the moments of the creation and the fall, reconciliation and forgiveness, and of renewal and restoration. It is a confession which proceeds from the triune God and which leads everything back to Him.

Therefore the article of the holy trinity is the heart and core of our confession, the differentiating earmark of our religion, and the praise and comfort of all true believers of Christ.

It was this confession which was at stake in the warfare of the spirits throughout the centuries. The confession of the holy trinity is the precious pearl which was entrusted for safekeeping and defense to the Christian church.

* * * * *

If this confession of the trinity of God takes such a central position in the Christian faith, it is important to know on what ground it rests and from what source it has flowed into the church. They are not a

few in our time who hold that it is the fruit of human argument and academic learning and who, accordingly, regard it as of no value for the religious life. According to them the original Gospel, as it was proclaimed by Jesus, knew nothing about any such doctrine of the trinity of God — that is, nothing about the term itself nor about the reality to which the term was intended to give expression. It was only — so the argument goes — when the original and simple Gospel of Jesus was brought into relationship with Greek philosophy and was falsified by it that the Christian church absorbed the person of Christ in His Divine nature, and eventually also the Holy Spirit into the Divine Being. And so it came about that the church confessed three persons in the one Divine being.

But the Christian church itself has always had quite a different idea about that. It saw in the doctrine of the trinity no discovery of subtle theologians, no product of the wedding of Gospel and Greek philosophy, but a confession rather which was materially concluded in the Gospel and in the whole Word of God — a doctrine, in short, which was inferred by Christian faith from the revelation of God. In answer to the question, Since there is but one Divine Being, why do you speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? the Heidelberg Catechism gives a brief and conclusive answer: Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word (Question 25). The revelation of God is the firm ground on which this confession of the church also rests. It is the source out of which this doctrine of the one, holy, catholic, Christian church has grown and been built up. God has thus revealed Himself. And He has revealed Himself thus, that is, as a triune God, because He exists in that way; and He exists in this way because He has so revealed Himself.

The Trinity in the revelation of God points back to the Trinity in His existence.

This revelation did not happen in a single moment. It was not presented and perfected in a single point of time. Rather, this revelation has a long history, spread out over the centuries. It began at the creation, continued after the fall in the promises and deeds of grace which accrued to Israel, and reached its apex in the person and work of Christ, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the church. It maintains itself now throughout the centuries, and over against all opposition, in the ineradicable witness of Scripture and in the rock-firm confession of the church. Because the revelation has had this long history, there is progress and development also in the confession of God's triune existence. God undergoes no change, remaining always the same. But in the progress of revelation, He makes Himself always clearer and more glorious to people and to angels. As His revelation continues, our knowledge grows.

* * * * *

When, in the days of the Old Covenant, God begins to reveal Himself, the thing that stands in the foreground is certainly the unity, the oneness, of God.

For, due to the sin of man, the pure knowledge of God had been lost; the truth, as Paul profoundly says, was held in unrighteousness. Even that which can be known of God in the things that He has made was made vain by their imaginations and was darkened by the foolishness of their hearts. On every hand mankind fell into idolatry and the worship of images (Rom. 1:18-23).

Hence it was necessary that the revelation begin with an emphasis upon the unity of God. It seems to cry out to mankind: The gods before which ye bow are not the true God. There is but one true God, namely, the God who at the beginning made the heaven and the

earth (Gen.1:1 and 2:1), the God who made Himself known to Abraham as God the Almighty (Gen. 17:1 and Ex. 6:3), the God who appeared to Moses as Jehovah, as the I-Am-that-I-Am (Ex. 3:14), and the God who, out of sovereign favor, chose the people of Israel, and called them, and accepted them in His covenant (Ex. 19:4ff.). First of all, therefore, the revelation had as its content: Jehovah alone is Elohim, the Lord alone is God, and there is no other God beside Him.¹

For the people of Israel, too, the revelation of the oneness of God was desperately necessary. Israel was surrounded on all sides by heathen and by heathen who at all times tried to tempt it into apostacy and unfaithfulness to the Lord; moreover, right on up to the captivity a great part of the people of Israel felt themselves attracted to the pagan idolatry and image worship, and again and again fell into the practice of them despite the proscription of the law and the warning of the prophets. Therefore, God Himself placed the emphasis on the fact that He, the Lord, who was now appearing to Moses and who wanted to redeem His people through Moses, was the same God who had made Himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Almighty God (Ex. 3:6 and 15). When He gave His law to Israel He wrote above it as its preamble: I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt. And in the first commandment, and the second, He strictly forbade all idolatry and worship of images (Ex. 20:2-5). Be'cause the Lord our God is one God, Israel must love Him with its whole heart, its whole soul, and all its strength (Deut. 6:4-5). The Lord alone is Israel's God and therefore Israel may serve only Him.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the oneness of God is so strongly emphasized, and, as it were, constitutes the first article of Israel's basic law, the distinctions within that unity of the Godhead come to

light also as in that revelation His fulness of Being progresses. The very name which is usually employed for designating God in the original Hebrew has a certain significance here. For this name *Elohim*, is in plural form, and therefore, although it does not, as was formerly generally supposed, designate the three persons of the divine Being, it does, in its character as an intensive plural, point to the fulness of life and of power which are present in God. It is, no doubt, in connection with this same fact, that God sometimes, in speaking of Himself, uses a plural referent, and by this means makes distinctions within Himself that bear a person'al character (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:22; and Isa. 6:8).

Of greater significance is the teaching of the Old Testament to the effect that God brings everything in His creation and providence into being by His Word and Spirit. He is not a human being, who, at the cost of great difficulty and exertion, makes something else out of the materials He has at hand. Instead, simply by the act of speaking, He calls everything into being out of nothing.

In the first chapter of Genesis we are taught this truth in the loftiest way possible, and elsewhere, too, it is expressed most gloriously in word and song. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast (Ps. 33:9). He sends out His word, and melts the morsels of ice (Ps. 147:18). His voice is upon the waters, shakes the wilderness, causes the hills to skip like a calf, and discovers the forests (Ps. 29:3-10). Two truths are contained in this exalted account of God's works: the first is that God is the Almighty One who has but to speak and all things leap into being, whose word is *law* (Ps. 33:9) and whose voice is *power* (Ps. 29:4); and the second is that God works deliberately, and not with'out forethought, and carries out all His works with the highest wisdom. The word which God speaks is power, but it is also the vehicle of thought. He has made the

earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion (Jer. 10:12 and 51:15). He has made all His works in wisdom: the earth is full of His riches (Ps. 104:24). This wisdom of God did not come to Him from outside Himself, but was with Him from the beginning. He possessed it as the principle of His way, before His works of old. When He prepared the heavens, set a compass upon the face of the deep, established the clouds above, strengthened the fountains of the deep, then wisdom was already there, brought up alongside of Him, daily his delight, and rejoicing always before Him (Prov. 8:22-31 and Job 20:20-28). God rejoiced in the wisdom with which He created the world.

Alongside of this word and wisdom the Spirit of God as the Mediator of the creation makes His appearance just as God at one and the same time *is* wisdom and *possesses* it, so that He can share it and can exhibit it in His works, so He Himself is Spirit in His being (Deut. 4:12, 15) and He possesses Spirit, that Spirit by which He can dwell in the world and be always and everywhere present in it (Ps. 139:7). Without any one having been His counsellor, the Lord by His Spirit brought everything into being (Isa. 40:13ff.). At the beginning that Spirit moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2), and He remains active in all that was created. By that Spirit God garnishes the heavens (Job 26:13), renews the face of the earth (Ps. 104:30), gives life to man (Job 33:4), maintains the breath in man's nostrils (Job 27:3), gives him understanding and wisdom (Job 32:8), and also causes the grass to wither and the flower to fade (Isa. 40:7). In short, by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth (Ps. 33:6).

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And this self-diversity of God comes out even more in the works of the re-creation. Then it is not Elohim, but Jehovah, not God in general, but the Lord, the God of the covenant, who reveals Himself and who makes Himself known in wonders of redemption and salvation. As such He redeems and leads His people, not by His word alone which He speaks or has conveyed to them, but also by means of the Angel of the covenant (the Angel of the Lord). This Angel appears already in the history of the patriarchs: to Hagar (Gen. 16:6ff.), to Abraham (Gen. 18ff.), and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13ff.). This Angel reveals His grace and power especially in the emancipation of Israel from the bond'age of Egypt.² This Angel of the Lord does not stand on the same plane of importance as the created angels; rather, He is a special revelation and manifestation of God. On the one hand, He is clearly distinguished from God, who speaks of Him as of His Angel, and yet, on the other hand, is one in name with God Himself, and in power, in redemption and blessing, in worshipfulness and honor. He is called God in Genesis 16:13, the God of Bethel in Genesis 31:13, exchanges places with God or the Lord (Gen. 28:30, 32 and Ex. 3:4), and He bears the name of God within Him (Ex. 23:21). He redeems from all evil (Gen. 48:16), rescues Israel from the hand of the Egyptians (Ex. 3:8), cleaves the waters and dries up the sea (Ex. 14:21), preserves the people of God in the way, brings them safely into Canaan, causes them to triumph over their enemies (Ex. 3:8 and 23:20), is to be absolutely obeyed as though He were God Himself (Ex. 23:20). and always en'camps around those who fear the Lord (Ps. 34:7 and 35:5).

Just as in His re-creating work, Jehovah carries out His redemptive activities through this Angel of the covenant, so He by His Spirit gives out all kinds of energies and gifts to His people. In the Old Testament the Spirit of the Lord is the source of all life, all weal, and all ability. He grants courage and strength to the judges, to Othniel

(Judges 3:10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), and to Samson (Judges 14:6 and 15:14). He grants artistic perception to the makers of the priests' garments, the tabernacle, and the temple,³ and He gives wisdom and understanding to the judges who bear the burden of the people alongside of Moses (Num. 11:17, 25). He gives the spirit of prophecy to the prophets,⁴ and renewal and sanctification and guidance to all of God's children (Ps. 51:12-13 and 143:10).

In short: the Word, the promise, the covenant, which the Lord gave to Israel at the exodus from Egypt, have existed throughout the ages, and still stood fast even after the Captivity in the days of Zerubbabel, so that the people had no need to fear (Haggai 2:4-5). When the Lord led Israel out of Egypt He became the Savior of Israel. And this disposition of God towards His people came to expression in the fact that in all their oppression He was oppressed (He regarded the affliction of His people as His own affliction), and that He therefore sent them His Angel to preserve them. He redeemed them by His love and grace and He took them up and carried them as His own throughout those days of old. He sent them the Spirit of His holiness in order to lead them in the ways of the Lord (Isa. 63:9-12). In the days of the Old Covenant, the Lord through the high priest laid His threefold blessing on the people of Israel: the blessing of vigil, the blessing of grace, and the blessing of peace (Num. 6:24-26).

Thus gradually, then, but ever more unmistakably, the threefold distinction within the Divine being comes to expression already in the history of God's leading of Israel. However, the Old Testament includes the further promises that in the future there will be a higher and richer revelation. After all, Israel repudiated the Word of the Lord and vexed His Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10 and Ps. 106). The revelation of God in the Angel of the covenant and in the Spirit of the

Lord proved to be inadequate: if God wanted to confirm His covenant and fulfill His promise, another and higher revelation would be necessary.

Such a revelation was heralded by the prophets. In the future, in the last days, then the Lord will call up out of the midst of Israel such a prophet as Moses was, and the Lord will put His words in that prophet's mouth (Deut. 18 :18). This one will be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4); He will be a king out of the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12-16), a rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1), a king, judging and seeking judgment (Isa. 16:5). A human being, a man He will be, and the son of a woman (Isa. 7:14), and He will be without form or comeliness (Isa. 53:2ff.); but, at the same time, He will be Immanuel (Isa. 7:14), the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6), the Angel of the covenant (Mal. 3:1), the Lord Himself appearing to His people (Hos. 1:7 and Mal. 3:1). And He bears the name of Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

This manifestation of the servant of the Lord is to be followed by a richer dispensation of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of the knowledge and fear of the Lord, this Spirit will rest upon the Messiah (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; and 61:1). He will be poured out upon all flesh, over sons and daughters, old men and young men, servants and handmaids,⁵ and He will give a new heart and a new spirit, so that His people may walk in His statutes, and keep His ordinances, and do them.⁶

Thus the Old Testament itself points out that the full revelation of God will consist of the revelation of His triune being.

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This promise and announcement the fulfillment of the New Testament fully satisfies. In this respect also, the unity or oneness of God is the point of departure of all revelation.⁷ But out of this oneness the difference in the Divine being now, in the New Testament, comes into much clearer light. This happens first in the great redemptive events of incarnation, satisfaction, and outpouring, and next in the instruction of Jesus and His apostles. The work of salvation is one whole, a work of God from beginning to end. But there are three high moments in it, election, forgiveness, and renewal, and these three point to a threefold cause in the Divine being: that is, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The very conceiving of Christ already shows us the threefold activity of God. For while the Father gives the Son to the world (John 3:16), and while the Son Himself descends from heaven (John 6:38), that Son is conceived in Mary of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20 and Luke 1:35). At His baptism Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, and is there publicly declared to be the beloved Son of the Father, the Son in whom He is well pleased (Matt. 3:16-17). The works which Jesus did were shown Him by the Father (John 5:19 and 8:38), and they are fulfilled by Him in the strength of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28). In His dying He offers Himself to God in the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). The resurrection is a raising up by the Father (Acts 2:24) and is at the same time Jesus' own act by which He is greatly proved to be the Son of the Father according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:3). And after his resurrection He, on the fortieth day, ascends in the Spirit which quickened Him on high in heaven and there He makes the angels and authorities and powers subject to Himself.

The teaching of Jesus and the apostles agrees fully with the lesson of those events themselves.

Jesus came to earth to declare the *Father* and to make His name known among men (John 1:18 and 17:6). The name of father applied to God as creator of all things was also used by the pagans. This meaning of the term is supported also by Scripture at various places.⁸ Besides, the Old Testament several times uses the designation Father to refer to God's theocratic relationship to Israel because in His marvelous ability He has created and maintained that relationship (Deut. 32:6 and Isa. 63:16). But in the New Testament a gloriously new light is shed upon this name of father as applied to God. Jesus always indicates an essential difference between the relationship in which He Himself stands to God and that in which others, say the Jews or the disciples, stand to Him. When, for example, He teaches the disciples, at their request, the "Our Father. . ." He says expressly "When *ye* pray, say. . . ." And when, after the resurrection, He announces His forthcoming ascension to Mary Magdalene, He says: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). In other words, God is His *own* Father (John 5:18). He knows the Son and loves Him in such a way and to such an extent as, reciprocally, only the Son can know and love the Father.⁹ Among the apostles, accordingly, God is constantly referred to as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). This relationship between the Father and the Son did not develop in time but existed from eternity (John 1:1, 14; 17:24). God is therefore Father in the first place because in a very unique sense He is the Father of the Son. This is His original, special personal characteristic.

In a derived sense God is further called the Father of all creatures because He is their creator and sustainer (1 Cor. 8:6, and elsewhere). He is called the Father of Israel because Israel is His handiwork by virtue of election and calling (Deut. 32:6 and Isa. 64:8), and the Father of the church and all believers because the love of the Father

for the Son accrues to them (John 16:27 and 17:24) and because they have been accepted as His children and are born of Him through the Spirit (John 1:12 and Rom. 8:15).

The Father is therefore always the *Father*, the first person, He from whom in the being of God, in the counsel of God, and in all the works of creation and providence, redemption and sanctification, the initiative proceeds. He gave the Son to have life in Himself (John 5:26), and He sends out the Spirit (John 15:26). His is the election and the good pleasure (Matt 11:26 and Eph. 1:4, 9, 11). From Him proceed the creation, providence, redemption, and renewal (Ps. 33:6 and John 3:16). To Him in a special sense the kingdom and the power and the glory accrue (Matt 6:13). He particularly bears the name of *God* in distinction from the *Lord* Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Christ Himself as Mediator calls Him His Father, not only, but also His God (Matt 27:46 and John 20:17) and Christ is Himself called the Christ of God.¹⁰ In a word, the first person of the Divine being *is the Father* because “*of Him are all things*” (1 Cor. 8:6).

If God is the Father, the inference is that there also is a *Son* who received life from Him and who shares His love. In the Old Testament the name of son of God was used for angels,¹¹ for the people of Israel,¹² and particularly too for the theocratic king of that people.¹³ But in the New Testament this name takes on a far profounder meaning. For Christ is the Son of God in a very peculiar sense; He is highly exalted above angels and prophets (Matt. 13:32; 21:27; and 22:2), and He Himself says that no one can know the Son except the Father, and no one can know the Father except the Son (Matt. 11:27). In distinction from angels and men, He is the Father’s own Son (Rom. 8:32), the beloved Son in whom the Father is well

pleased (Matt 3:17), the only-begotten Son (John 1:18) whom the Father gave to have life in Himself (John 5:26).

This very special, this unique, relationship between Father and Son did not develop in time by way of the supernatural conception of the Holy Spirit, or of the anointing at baptism, or of the resurrection and ascension — though many have maintained this — but is a relationship which has existed from all eternity. The Son who in Christ assumed human nature was in the beginning with God as the Word (John 1:1). then already had the form of God (Phil. 2:6), was rich and clothed with glory (John 17:5, 24), was then already the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3), and precisely therefore He could in the fulness of time be sent out, given, and brought into the world.¹⁴ Hence, too, the creation (John 1:3 and Col. 1:16) and providence (Heb 1:3) and the accomplishment of the whole of salvation (1 Cor. 1:30) are ascribed to Him. He is not, as creatures are made or created, but is instead, the first-born of all creatures that is the Son who has the rank and rights of the first-born over against all creatures (Col 1:15) Thus He is also the first-born of the dead, the first-born of many brethren, and therefore among all and in all He is the first (Rom 8:29 and Col 1:18) And even though in the fulness of time, He assumed the form of a servant, He was nevertheless in the form of God. He was in all things like unto God the Father (Phil. 2:6):. in life (John 5:26), in knowledge (Matt. 11:27), in strength (John 1:3 and 5:21, 26), in honor (John 5:23). He is Himself God, to be praised above all else into eternity.¹⁵ Just as all things are *of* the Father, so they are also all *through* the Son (1 Cor. 8:6).

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Both, Father and Son, come together and are united in the *Holy Spirit* and by means of the Spirit dwell in all creatures. True, God is according to His nature a Spirit (John 4:24) and He is holy (Isa. 6:3); but the Holy Spirit is clearly distinguished from God as Spirit. Just as, in a comparative way of speaking, man is a spirit in his invisible nature and also possesses a spirit, by means of which he is aware of himself and is self-conscious, so God is a Spirit by nature and also possesses a Spirit, a Spirit which searches the depths of His being (1 Cor. 2:11). As such the latter is called the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:12 and Isa. 63:10-11). And this is done in distinction from the spirit of an angel or of a human being or of any other creature. But, although He is distinguished from God, from the Father and the Son, He stands in the most intimate of relationships with both. He is called the breath of the Almighty (Job 33:4), the breath of His mouth (Ps. 33:6), is sent out by the Father and the Son (John 14:26 and 15:26), and He proceeds from both, not from the Father alone (John 15:26) but also from the Son, for He is also called the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of the Father (Rom. 8:9).

Although the Holy Spirit is in that way given or sent or poured out by the Father and the Son, He often makes His appearance as a power or a gift which qualifies men for their calling or office. Thus, for example, the Holy Spirit is spoken of at various places in the Acts of the Apostles in connection with the gift of prophecy (8:15; 10:44; 11:15; 15:8; and 19:2). But it is not warranted to infer from that fact, as many do, that the Holy Spirit is nothing more or other than a gift or power of God. At other places He definitely makes His appearance as a person, one who bears personal names, has personal characteristics, and does personal deeds. Thus in John 15:26 and 16:13, 14 (although the Greek of the word translated *Spirit* in our language is of neuter gender) Christ uses the masculine referent: *He* shall testify of Me and glorify Me. At the same place Christ calls Him

Comforter, using the same name that is used of Christ in 1 John 2:1, a name translated *advocate* in the English version.

Besides these personal names all sorts of personal characteristics are ascribed to the Holy Spirit: for example, selfhood (Acts 13:2), self-consciousness (Acts 15:28), self-determination or will (1 Cor. 12:11). Besides He is credited with all kinds of personal activities, such as investigating (1 Cor. 2:11), listening (John 16:13), speaking (Rev. 2:17), teaching (John 14:26), praying (Rom. 8:27), and the like. And all this comes out most clearly and sublimely in the fact that He is placed on one and the same level with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14).

The last point is the most important and it indicates the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person not merely but also very God. And Scriptures provide all the data which are necessary to make this confession. We have only to note that despite the distinction between God and His Spirit which was pointed out above, the two frequently exchange places in Scripture, so that it is quite the same whether God or His Spirit says or does a thing. In Acts 5:3-4 the lying to the Holy Spirit is called a lying to God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 the believers are called God's temple, because the Spirit of God dwells in them. To these facts we must add that various Divine attributes, such as eternity (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), omniscience (1 Cor. 2:11), omnipotence (1 Cor. 12:4-6), and various Divine works, such as creation (Ps. 33:6), providence (Ps. 104:30), and redemption (John 3:3) are ascribed to the Holy Spirit quite as well as to the Father and the Son. Consequently He shares in the same glory with those two. He takes His place alongside of the Father and the Son as the cause of salvation (2 Cor. 13:14 and Rev. 1:4). It is in His name also that we are baptized (Matt. 28:19), and blessed (2 Cor. 13:14). Moreover, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unpardonable sin (Matt.

12:31-32). In other words, just as all things are *of* the Father and *through* the Son, they all exist and rest *in* the Holy Spirit.

All of these elements of the doctrine of the trinity, spread throughout the Scriptures, were gathered together, so to speak, by Jesus in His baptismal command and by the apostles in their benedictions. After His resurrection and before His ascension, Christ bids His apostles to go out and make all peoples His disciples and to baptize them in the one name in which, nevertheless, three different subjects are revealed. Father, Son, and Spirit are in their oneness and their distinction the fulness of the perfected revelation of God. Just so, too, according to the apostles the whole good and salvation of man is contained in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ The good pleasure, the foreknowledge, the power, the love, the kingdom, and the strength are the Father's. The Mediatorship, the reconciliation, the grace, and the redemption are the Son's. The regeneration, the renewal, the sanctification, the redemption are the Spirit's.

The relationship in which Christ stands to the Father corresponds fully with the relationship in which the Spirit stands to Christ. Just as the Son speaks nothing and does nothing of Himself but receives everything from the Father (John 5:26 and 16:15), so the Holy Spirit takes everything from Christ (John 16:13-14). As the Son testifies of the Father and glorifies the Father (John 1:18 and 17:4, 6), so the Holy Spirit testifies of the Son and glorifies Him (John 15:26 and 16:14). Just as no one comes to the Father but through the Son (John 14:6), so no one can say that Jesus is the Lord except through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Through the Spirit we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is in the Holy Spirit that God Himself through Christ dwells in our hearts. And if this all be so, then the

Holy Spirit is, together with the Son and the Father, the one, true God, and is to be eternally lauded and praised as such.

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To this instruction of the Holy Spirit the Christian church in its confession of the Trinity of God has said yea and amen. The church did not arrive at this rich and glorious confession without a hard and long struggle of the spirits. Centuries on end the profoundest experience of the spiritual life of the children of God and the doughtiest intellect of the fathers and teachers of the church went into the understanding of this point of the revelation of Scripture and to reproducing it purely in the confession of the church. No doubt the church would not have succeeded in this effort at the laying of foundations, if it had not been led into the truth by the Holy. Spirit, and if in Tertullian and Irenaeus, Athanasius and the three Cappadocians, Augustine, and Hillary, and so many others besides, it had not received the men who, endowed and equipped with unusual gifts of godliness and wisdom, kept to the straight course.

Nothing less than the peculiar essence of Christianity was at stake in this battle of the spirits. From two sides the church was exposed to the danger of permitting itself to be wrested from the firm foundation on which it was built and so to be submerged by the world.

On the one hand, there was the threat of Arianism, so called after the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who died in the year 336. Anus held that the Father alone was the eternal and true God, inasmuch as He alone in the full sense of the word was ungenerated. Concerning the Son, the Logos, who in Christ had become flesh, he taught that, inasmuch as this Christ was generated, He could not be God but had to be a creature — a creature, it is true, who had been made before other

creatures, but nevertheless was made as they were made through the will of God. And, in the same way, Arius held that the Holy Spirit was a creature or else a quality or attribute of God.

On the other side the party of Sabellianism was at work, so called after a certain Sabellius who lived in Rome at the beginning of the third century. Sabellius held that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were but three names for one and the same God — a God who had made Himself known thus successively as His revelation progressed in various forms and manifestations. In the form of the Father, accordingly, God was operative as Creator and Lawgiver. Thereupon He worked as Redeemer in the form of the Son. And He now works in the form of the Holy Spirit as the Re-creator of the church.

While Arianism tries to maintain the oneness of God, by placing Son and Spirit outside the Divine being and reducing these to the level of creatures, Sabellianism tries to arrive at the same end by robbing the three persons of the Godhead of their independence. This it does by metamorphosing the persons into three successive modes of revelation of the same Divine Being. In the first tendency the Jewish, deistic, rationalistic mode of thinking comes to expression rather characteristically, and in the second the idea of Pagan pantheism and mysticism. The moment the church set about giving itself a fairly clear account of the truth which was later stated in the confession of the Trinity of God, these two other tendencies arose alongside at the right and left, and they accompany the confession of the church to this day. Always and again the church and each one of its members must be on guard against doing injustice on the one hand to the oneness of the Divine Being, and on the other to the three Persons within that Being. The oneness may not be sacrificed to the diversity, nor the diversity to the oneness. To maintain both in their

inseparable connection and in their pure relationship, not only theoretically but also in practical life, is the calling of all believers.

In order to satisfy this requirement, the Christian church and Christian theology in the early period made use of various words and expressions which cannot be found literally in the Holy Scriptures. The church began to speak of the *essence* of God and of three *persons* in that essence of being. It spoke of the *triune* and the *trinitarian*, or of *essential* and *personal* characteristics, of the *eternal generation* of the Son and of the *proceeding* of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son, and the like.

There is no reason at all why the church and the Christian theology should not use such terms and modes of expression. For the Holy Scripture was not given to the church by God to be thoughtlessly repeated but to be understood in all its fulness and riches, and to be restated in its own language in order that in this way it might proclaim the mighty works of God. Moreover, such terms and expressions are necessary in order to maintain the truth of Scripture over against its opponents and to secure it against misunderstanding and error. And history has taught throughout the centuries that a lighthearted disapproval and rejection of these names and modes of expression leads to various departures from the confession.

At the same time, we should, in the use of these terms, always remember that they are of human origin and therefore limited, defective, fallible. The church fathers always acknowledged this. For example, they held that the term *persons* which was used to designate the three ways of existence in the Divine Being did not do justice to the truth in the matter but served as an aid towards maintaining the truth and cutting off error. The word was chosen, not because it was accurate in every respect, but because no other

and better was to be found. In this matter again the word is far behind the thought, and the thought is far behind the actuality. Although we cannot preserve the actuality in any but this inadequate form, we may never forget that it is the reality itself and not the word that counts. In the dispensation of glory other and better expressions will certainly be laid upon our lips.

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The reality itself which is concerned in the confession of the holy trinity is of the highest importance, both for the mind and the heart.

For it is by that confession that the church maintains, in the first place, both the unity and the diversity in the being of God. The Divine Being is one: there is but one Being that is God and that may be called God. In creation and redemption, in nature and grace, in church and world, in state and society, everywhere and always we are concerned with one, same, living, and true God. The unity of the world, of mankind, of truth, of virtue, of justice, and of beauty depends upon the unity of God. The moment that unity of God is denied or under stressed, the door is open to polytheism.

But this unity or oneness of God is, according to Scripture and the confession of the church, not a contentless unity, nor a solitariness, but a fulness of life and strength. It comprises difference, or distinction, or diversity. It is that diversity which comes to expression in the three persons or modes of being of God. These three persons are not merely three modes of revelation. They are modes of being. Father, Son, and Spirit share one and the same Divine nature and characteristics. They are one being. Nevertheless each has His own name, His own particular characteristic, by which He is distinguished from the others. The Father alone has

fatherhood, the Son alone has generation, and the Spirit alone possesses the quality of proceeding from both.

To that order of existence in the Divine Being the order of the three persons in all Divine work corresponds. The Father is He *from* whom, the Son is He *through* whom, and the Spirit is He *in* whom all things are. All things in the creation, and in the redemption, or re-creation, come from the Father, through the Son and the Spirit. And in the Spirit and through the Son they are come back to Him. It is to the Father that we are particularly indebted, therefore, for his electing love, to the Son for His redeeming grace, and to the Spirit for his regenerative and renewing power.

In the second place, the church in maintaining this confession, takes a strong position over against the heresies of deism (belief in God without revelation) and pantheism (polytheism) and of Judaism and Paganism. Always there is that dual tendency in the human heart: the tendency to think of God as distant and removed and to think of self and world as independent of God, and the tendency to draw God down into the world, to identify Him with the world, and so to deify the self and the world. When the first tendency prevails in us we come to the point of thinking that we can do without God in nature, in our calling, in our business, in our science and art, and also in the work of redemption. And, if the second tendency prevails in us, we change the glory of God into the image of some creature or other, deify the world, the sun, the moon and the stars, art, science, or the state, and in the creature, usually conceived in our image, we worship our own greatness. In the first instance God is only afar *off*; in the second He is only nearby. In the first, He is outside of the world, above it, free from it; in the second, He is inside it and identical with it.

But the church confesses both: God is above the world, distinguished from it in essence, and yet He is with His whole being present in it and at no point in space or time separated from it. He is both afar off and nearby. He is both highly exalted above all creatures and at the same time deeply condescending to them all. He is our Creator who brought us into being by His will as creatures distinct from Him in kind. He is our Redeemer who saves us, not by our works but by the riches of His grace. He is our Sanctifier who dwells in us as in His temple. As the triune God He is one God and is *above* us, *for* us, and *in* us.

Finally, in the third place, this confession of the church is also of the greatest importance for the spiritual life. Quite unjustifiably it is sometimes maintained that the doctrine of the trinity is merely a philosophically abstracted dogma and that it possesses no value for religion and life. The Reformed Confession of Faith takes an entirely different view of this. In Article XI of that Confession the church stated that God is one in essence and three in persons. This we know from the witness of Holy Scripture, and from the activities of the three persons, especially those which we sense within us. True, we do not base our faith in the trinity on feeling and experience; but when we believe it, we notice that the doctrine stands in intimate relationship with the spiritual experience of the children of God.

For the believers come to know the workings of the Father, the Creator of all things, He who gave them life, and breath, and all things. They learn to know Him as the Lawgiver who gave out His holy commandments in order that they should walk in them. They learn to know Him as the Judge who is provoked to terrible wrath by all the unrighteousness of men and who in no sense holds the guilty guiltless. And they learn to know Him, finally, as the Father who for Christ's sake is their God and Father, on whom they trust so far that

they do not doubt but that He will supply for every need of body and soul, and that He will convert all evil which accrues to them in this vale of tears into good. They know that He can do this as Almighty God and that He wants to do it as a faithful Father. Hence they confess: I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Thus, too, they learn to know in themselves the workings of the Son, He who is the only-begotten of the Father, conceived in Mary of the Holy Spirit. They learn to know Him as their highest Prophet and Teacher, He who has perfectly revealed to them the secret counsel and will of God in the matter of their redemption. They learn to know Him as their only High priest, who has redeemed them by the one sacrifice of His body, and who still constantly intercedes for them with the Father. They learn to know Him as their eternal King, who rules them with His Word and Spirit and who shelters and preserves them in their achieved redemption. Hence they confess: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, our Lord.

And they also learn to recognize in themselves the workings of the Holy Spirit, He who regenerates them and leads them into all truth. They learn to know Him as the Operator of their faith, He who through that faith causes them to share in Christ and all His benefits. They learn to know Him as the Comforter, He who prays in them with unutterable longings and who testifies with their spirit that they are children of God. They learn to know Him as the pledge of their eternal inheritance, He who preserves them until the day of their redemption. And they therefore confess: I believe also in the Holy Spirit.

Thus the confession of the trinity is the sum of the Christian religion. Without it neither the creation nor the redemption nor the

sanctification can be purely maintained.

Every departure from this confession leads to error in the other heads of doctrine, just as a mistaken representation of the articles of faith can be traced back to a misconception of the doctrine of the trinity. We can truly proclaim the mighty works of God only when we recognize and confess them as the one great work of Father, Son, and Spirit.

In the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is contained the whole salvation of men.

Notes

1. Deut. 4:35,39; Josh. 22:22; 2 Sam. 7:22; 22:32; 1 Kings 18:39; Isa. 45:5,18, 21; and elsewhere.
2. Ex. 3:2; 13:21; 14:19; 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2; and Num. 20:16.
3. Ex. 28:3; 31:3-5; 35:31-35; and 1 Chron. 28:12.
4. Num. 11:25,29; 24:2-3; Micah 3:8; and like passages.
5. Joel 2:28-29; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:26-27; and Zech. 12:10.
6. Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26; Jer. 31:31-34 and 32:38-41.
7. John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4; and 1 Tim. 2:5.
8. Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28; Eph. 3:15; and Heb. 12:9.
9. Matt. 11:27; Mark 12:6; and John 5:20.
10. Luke 9 :20; 1 Cor. 3 :23; and Rev. 12:10.
11. Job 38: 7
12. Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:6, 18 and Hosea 11:1.
13. 2 Sam. 7:11-14 Ps. 2:7.
14. John 3:16; Gal. 4:4; and Heb. 1:6.
15. John 1:1; 20:8; Rom. 9:5; and Heb. 1:8-9.
16. 1 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:4-6; and Rev. 1:4-6.

The Greatness of God

by Herman Bavinck

On the very first page of the Bible the absolute transcendence of God above His creatures comes to our attention. Without strain or fatigue He calls the whole world into existence by His word alone. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth (Ps. 33 :6). He speaks and it is done; He commands and it stands fast (Ps. 33:9). He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou (Dan. 4:35)? The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him as less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto Him (Isa. 40:15-18). For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord (Ps. 89:6). There is no name by which He can truly be named: His name is wonderful.¹ When God speaks to Job out of the thunder and displays the magnitude of His works before him, Job humbly bows his head, and says: Behold, I am vile, What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth (Job 40:4). God is great, and we know Him not (Job 36:26). Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. It is high. We cannot attain unto it (Ps. 139:6).

Nevertheless, this same sublime and exalted God stands in intimate all His creatures, even the meanest and smallest. What the scriptures give us is not an abstract concept of God, such as the philosopher gives us, but puts the very. living God before us and lets us see Him in the works of His hands. We have hut to lift up our eyes and see who has made all things. All things were made by His hand, brought forth by His will and His deed. And they are all sustained by His strength. Hence everything bears the stamp of His excellences and the mark of His goodness, wisdom, and power. And among creatures only man was created in His image and likeness. Only man is called the offspring of God (Acts 17:28).

Because of this intimate relationship, God can be named in the terms of His creatures, and He can be spoken of anthropomorphically. The same Scripture which speaks in the most exalted way of God's incomparable greatness and majesty, at the same time speaks of Him in figures and images which sparkle with life. It speaks of His eyes and ears, His hands and feet, His mouth and lips, His heart and bowels. It ascribes all kinds of attributes to Him - of wisdom and knowledge, will and power, righteousness and mercy, and it ascribes to Him also such emotions as joy and grief, fear and vexation, zeal and envy, remorse and wrath, hatred and anger. It speaks of His observing and thinking, His hearing and seeing, His remembering and forgetting, smelling and tasting, sitting and rising, visiting and forsaking, blessing and chastising, and the like. It compares Him to a sun and a light, a fountain and a spring, a rock and a shelter, a sword and buckler, a lion and an eagle, a hero and a warrior, an artist and builder, a king and a judge, a husbandman and a shepherd, a man and a father. In short, all that can be found in the whole world in the way of support and shelter and aid is originally and perfectly to be found in overflowing abundance in God. Of Him the whole family in

heaven and earth is named (Eph. 3.15). He is the Sun of being and all creatures are His fleeting rays.

It is important, therefore, in this matter of the knowledge of God, for us to keep a firm hold on both of these groups of statements concerning the Divine being and to do justice to each of them. For, if we sacrifice the absolute transcendence of God above all of His creatures, we fall into polytheism (the pagan religion of many gods) or pantheism (the religion in which everything is God), two false religions which, according to the lesson of history, are closely related to each other and easily pass from the one into the other.

And if we sacrifice the close relationship of God to His creatures, we go aground on the reef of deism (belief in God without benefit of revelation) or of atheism (the denial of the existence of God), two religions which, like those others, have numerous characteristics in common with each other.

Scripture clings to both groups of characteristics, and Christian theology has followed in its wake. God actually does not have a name according to which we can truly name Him, and He names Himself and lets us name Him with many, many names. He is the infinitely Exalted One, and at the same time the One who lives along with all His creatures. In a certain sense all of His attributes are such as cannot be shared, and in another sense they are such as can all be shared. We cannot fathom this with our mind. There is no such thing as an adequate concept of God. There is no one who can give a definition, a delimitation, of God that is adequate to His being. The name which fully expresses what He is cannot be found. But the one group of characteristics outlined above does not conflict with the other. Precisely because God is the High and Exalted One, and lives in eternity, He also dwells with those who are of a contrite and

humble Spirit (Isa. 57 :15. We know that God did not reveal Himself in order that we should draw up a philosophical concept of God from His revelation, but in order that we should accept Him, the true, living God, as our God, and should acknowledge and confess Him. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but they have been revealed to babes (Matt. 11 :25).

The knowledge which we get of God by way of His revelation is therefore a knowledge of faith. It is not adequate, in the sense that it is not equivalent to the being of God, for God is infinitely exalted above all His creatures. Such knowledge is not purely symbolical either that is to say, couched in expressions which we have arbitrarily formed and which do not correspond to any reality; instead this knowledge is ectypal (ectype: an impression, as in printing) or analogical (analogy: correspondence or similarity in form) because it is based on the likeness and relationship which, notwithstanding God's absolute majesty, nevertheless exists between God and all the works of His hand. The Knowledge which God grants us of Himself in nature and in Scripture is limited, finite, fragmentary, but it is nevertheless true and pure. Such is God as He has revealed Himself in His Word and specifically in and through Christ; and He alone is such as our hearts require.

Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956.
Pages 132-134.

The Greatness and Miserableness of Man

Herman Bavinck

The conclusion, therefore, is that of Augustine, who said that the heart of man was created for God and that it cannot find rest until it rests in his Father's heart. Hence all men are really seeking after God, as Augustine also declared, but they do not all seek Him in the right way, nor at the right place. They seek Him down below, and He is up above. They seek Him on the earth, and He is in heaven. They seek Him afar, and He is nearby. They seek Him in money, in property, in fame, in power, and in passion; and He is to be found in the high and the holy places, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa. 57:15). But they do seek Him, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him (Acts 17:27). They seek Him and at the same time they flee Him. They have no interest in a knowledge of His ways, and yet they cannot do without Him. They feel themselves attracted to God and at the same time repelled by Him.

In this, as Pascal so profoundly pointed out, consists the greatness and the miserableness of man. He longs for truth and is false by nature. He yearns for rest and throws himself from one diversion upon another. He pants for a permanent and eternal bliss and seizes on the pleasures of a moment. He seeks for God and loses himself in the creature. He is a born son of the house and he feeds on the husks of the swine in a strange land. He forsakes the fountain of living waters and hews out broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13). He is as a hungry man who dreams that he is eating, and when he awakes finds that his soul is empty; and he is like a thirsty man who dreams that he is drinking, and when he awakes finds that he is faint and that his soul has appetite (Isa. 29:8).

Science cannot explain this contradiction in man. It reckons only with his greatness and not with his misery, or only with his misery

and not with his greatness. It exalts him too high, or it depresses him too far, for science does not know of his Divine origin, nor of his profound fall. But the Scriptures know of both, and they shed their light over man and over mankind; and the contradictions are reconciled, the mists are cleared, and the hidden things are revealed. Man is an enigma whose solution can be found only in God.

Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956. Pages 22-23.

The Present State of the World

by Herman Bavinck

When the first man and woman have transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, their punishment does not follow immediately nor in full force. They do not die on the self-same day they have sinned, but remain alive; they are not sent into hell, but instead find themselves entrusted with a task on earth; their line does not perish: they receive the promise of the seed of the woman. In short, a condition now sets in which God had known and which God had established, but which man had not been able to anticipate. It is a condition which has a very special character. It is one in which wrath and grace, punishment and blessing, judgment and long-suffering are mingled with each other. It is the condition which still

exists in nature and among men and one which comprehends the sharpest of contrasts within itself.

We live in a strange world, a world which presents us with tremendous contrasts. The high and the low, the great and the small, the sublime and the ridiculous, the beautiful and the ugly, the tragic and the comic, the good and the evil, the truth and the lie, these all are heaped up in unfathomable interrelationship. The gravity and the vanity of life seize on us in turn. Now we are prompted to optimism, then to pessimism. Man weeping is constantly giving way to man laughing. The whole world stands in the sign of humor, which has been well described as a laugh in a tear.

The deepest cause of this present state of the world is this: because of the sin of man, God is continually manifesting His wrath and yet, by reason of His own good pleasure, is always again revealing His grace also. We are consumed by His anger and yet in the morning we are satisfied by His mercy (Ps. 90:7, 14). His anger endures but a moment, in His favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning (Ps. 30:6). Curse and blessing are so singularly interdependent that the one sometimes seems to become the other. Work in the sweat of the brow is curse and blessing at once. Both point to the cross which at one and the same time is the highest judgment and the richest grace. And that is why the cross is the mid-point of history and the reconciliation of all antitheses.

Our Reasonable Faith. Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House. 1956.
Pages 44-45.

Calvin and Common Grace

Herman Bavinck

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Translated by Geerhardus Vos

Christianity has from the beginning laid claim to be the one true religion. Already in the Old Testament the consciousness exists that Jehovah alone is Elohim and that the gods of the heathen are things of naught and vanity; and in the New Testament the Father of Jesus Christ is the only true God, whom the Son reveals and declares, and access to whom and communion with whom the Son alone can mediate. This conviction of the absoluteness of the Christian religion has entered so deeply into the consciousness of the Church that the whole history of Christian doctrine may be viewed as one great struggle for upholding it over against all sorts of opposition and denial. For the life of the Church as well as for every individual man the fundamental question is: What think ye of the Christ? This was the issue in the christological and anthropological controversies of the ancient Church, this the issue at the time of the Reformation and in the age of the "Enlightenment", and this is still the issue at the present day in the spiritual battles witnessed by ourselves. No progress can be marked in this respect: the question of the ages is still the question of our time,—Is Christ a teacher, a prophet, one of the many founders of religions; or is he the Only-begotten from the Father, and therefore the true and perfect revelation of God?

But if Christianity bears such an absolute character, this fact immediately gives rise to a most serious problem. The Christian religion is by no means the sole content of history; long before Christianity made its appearance there existed in Greece and Rome a rich culture, a complete social organism, a powerful political system, a plurality of religions, an order of moral virtues and actions. And even now, underneath and side by side with the Christian religion a rich stream of natural life continues to flow. What, then, is the relation of Christianity to this wealth of natural life, which, originating in creation, has, under the law there imposed upon it, developed from age to age? What is the connection between nature and grace, creation and regeneration, culture and Christianity, earthly and heavenly vocation, the man and the Christian? Nor can it be said that this problem has now for the first time forced itself upon us, owing to the wide extension of our world-knowledge, the entrance of the heathen nations into our field of vision and the extraordinary progress made by civilization. In principle and essence it has been present through all the ages,—in the struggle between Israel and the nations, in the contest between the Kingdom of Heaven and the world-power, in the warfare between the foolishness of the cross and the wisdom of the world.

To define this relation, Scripture draws certain lines which it is not difficult to trace. It proceeds on the principle that for man God is the supreme good. Whatever material or ideal possessions the world may offer, all these taken together cannot outweigh or even be compared with this greatest of all treasures, communion with God; and hence, in case of conflict with this, they are to be unconditionally sacrificed. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." This, however, does not hinder earthly possessions from retaining a relative value. Considered in themselves they are not sinful or unclean; so long as they do not interfere with

man's pursuit of the kingdom of heaven, they are to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. Scripture avoids both extremes, no less that of asceticism on the one hand than that of libertinism on the other hand. The recognition of this as a principle appears most clearly in its teaching that all things, the entire world with all its treasures, including matter and the body, marriage and labor, are created and ordained of God; and that Christ, although, when He assumed a true and perfect human nature, He renounced all these things in obedience to God's command, yet through His resurrection took them all back as henceforth purified of all sin and consecrated through the Spirit. Creation, incarnation and resurrection are the fundamental facts of Christianity and at the same time the bulwarks against all error in life and doctrine.

It needs no pointing out, however, that in the first age Christians had to assume a preponderantly negative attitude towards the culture of their time. They were neither sufficiently numerous nor on the whole sufficiently influential in the world to permit of their taking an active, aggressive part in the affairs of state and society, of science and art. Besides this, all institutions and elements of culture were so intimately associated with idolatry and superstition that without offense to conscience it was impossible to take part in them. For the first Christians nothing was to be expected from the Graeco-Roman world but persecution and reproach. Consequently, nothing was left for them but to manifest their faith for the time being through the passive virtues of obedience and patience. Only gradually could the Church rise to the higher standpoint of trying all things and holding fast to that which is good, and adopt an eclectic procedure in its valuation and assimilation of the existing culture.

Often in the past, and again in our own time has the charge been brought against the Christian Church, that in applying this principle,

it has falsified the original Gospel. Harnack finds in the history of doctrine a progressive Hellenizing of original Christianity. Hatch regards the entire Christian cultus, particularly that of the sacraments, in the light of a degeneration from the primitive Gospel. To Sohm the very idea of ecclesiastical law appears contradictory to the essence of the Christian Church. But such assertions partake of gross exaggeration. If in all these respects nothing but degeneration is to be found, it will be easy to show that to a considerable degree the degeneration must have set in with the Apostles and even with the writers of the synoptic Gospels, as has been freely acknowledged by not a few writers of recent date. The Christian Church is indeed charged with having falsified the original Gospel, but those who bring the charge retain practically nothing of this Gospel or are at least unable to say in what this Gospel consisted. It is as a rule made out to have been a simple doctrine of morals with an ascetic tinge. Then the problem arises, how such a Gospel could ever have come into real contact with culture, especially to the extent of suffering corruption from culture. A conception is thus formed, both of the original Gospel and of the attitude of the Christian Church toward pagan culture, which is based wholly on fancy and is at war with all the facts.

For not only is the Gospel not ascetic, but even the Christian Church, at least in its first period, never adopted this standpoint. However much it might be on its guard against paganism, it never despised or condemned natural life as in itself sinful. Marriage and family life, secular calling and military estate, the swearing of the oath and the waging of war, government and state, science and art and philosophy,—all these were recognized from the beginning as divine institutions and as divine gifts. Hence theology early began to form relations with philosophy; the art of painting, as practiced in the catacombs, attached itself to the symbols and figures of antiquity;

architecture shaped the churches after pagan models; music availed itself of the tunes which Graeco-Roman art had produced. On every hand a strong effort is perceptible to bring the new religion into touch with all existing elements of culture.

It was possible for the first Christians to do this because of their firm conviction that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, who in times past has never left Himself without witness to the heathen. Not only was there an original revelation, which, though in corrupted form, yet survived in tradition; it was also regarded as probable that certain philosophers had possessed a degree of acquaintance with the writings of the Jews. But in addition to this there existed in paganism a continued revelation through nature and the reason, in heart and conscience,—an illumination of the Logos, a speech from the wisdom of God through the hidden working of grace. *Anima naturaliter Christiana*, the man is older than the philosopher and the poet, Tertullian exclaimed, thus formulating a truth which lived in the hearts of all. No doubt among the heathen this wisdom has in many respects become corrupted and falsified; they retain only fragments of truth, not the one, entire, full truth. But even such fragments are profitable and good. The three sisters, logic, physics and ethics, are like unto the three wise men from the east, who came to worship in Jesus the perfect wisdom. The good philosophical thoughts and ethical precepts found scattered through the pagan world receive in Christ their unity and center. They stand for the desire which in Christ finds its satisfaction; they represent the question to which Christ gives the answer; they are the idea of which Christ furnishes the reality. The pagan world, especially in its philosophy, is a pedagogy unto Christ; Aristotle, like John the Baptist, is the forerunner of Christ. It behooves the Christians to enrich their temple with the vessels of the Egyptians and to adorn the

crown of Christ, their king, with the pearls brought up from the sea of paganism.

In saying this, however, we by no means wish to imply that the attitude of the Church towards the world has at all times and in every respect measured up to the Church's high calling. *A priori* it is not to be expected that it should, inasmuch as every human development shows abnormal traits and the life of every individual Christian is tainted with error and sin. When the Church of Rome maintains that the Gospel has been preserved by her and unfolded in its original purity, this claim is made possible only through ascribing infallibility to the Church. But by the very act of subscribing to this dogma, Rome acknowledges that without such a supernatural gift the development could not have been kept pure. Further, by attributing this gift to the Pope alone, Rome admits the possibility of error not only in the *ecclesia discens* but also in the *ecclesia docens*, even where the latter convenes in ecumenical council. And Rome's confining the effect of this infallible guidance to papal deliverances *ex cathedra* involves the confession that the Roman Catholic system, as a whole, with all its teaching and practice, enjoys no immunity from corruption. The dogma of papal infallibility is not the ground or cause, but only one of the many consequences and fruits of the system. And this system itself has not grown up from one principle; it has been developed in the course of the ages by the cooperation of numerous factors,—a development the end of which has not yet been reached.

Although Roman Catholicism has been built up out of varied, even heterogeneous elements, it nevertheless forms a compact structure, a coherent view of the world and of life, shaped in all its parts by a religious principle. This religion embraces in the first place a series of supernatural, inscrutable mysteries, chief among which are the

Trinity and the Incarnation. These truths have been entrusted to the Church to be preserved, taught and defended. To discharge these functions the Church, in the person of the Pope, as successor of Peter, needs the gift of infallibility. The doctrines are authoritatively imposed by the Church on all its members. The faith which accepts these mysteries has for its specific object the Church-dogma; it does not penetrate through the dogma to the things themselves of which the dogma is the expression; it does not bring into communion with God; it does not represent a religious but an intellectual act, the *assensus*, the *fides historica*. Faith is not a saving power in itself, but is merely preparatory to salvation; nevertheless, it is something meritorious because and in so far as it is an act of submission to ecclesiastical authority.

The Church, however, is not merely the possessor of supernatural truth; in the second place it is also the depository and dispenser of supernatural grace. As the Church doctrine is infinitely exalted above all human knowledge and science, so the grace kept and distributed by the Church far transcends nature. It is true this grace is, among other things, *gratia medicinalis*, but this is an accidental and adventitious quality. Before all else it is *gratia elevans*, something added to and elevating above nature. As such it entered into the image of God given to Adam before the Fall, and as such it again appears in the restoration to that original state. In view of its adding to exalted nature a supernatural element, it is conceived as something material, enclosed in the sacrament, and as such dispensed by the priest. Thus every man becomes, for his knowledge of supernatural truth and for his reception of supernatural grace, that is, for his heavenly salvation, absolutely dependent on the Church, the priest and the sacrament. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

But even this grace, which, to be sure, remains subject to loss and recovery until the end of life, does not assure man of attainment to fellowship with God. All it does is to impart to him the power whereby, if so choosing, he may merit, through good works, supernatural salvation, the *visio Dei*. Since work and reward must be proportionate, the good works which merit supernatural salvation must all be of a specific kind and therefore need to be defined and prescribed by the Church. The Church, besides being the depository of truth and the dispenser of grace, is in the third place also law-giver and judge. The satisfactions which the Church imposes are according to the character of the sins committed. The rapidity or slowness with which a man attains to perfection, how much time he shall spend in purgatory, how rich a crown he will receive in heaven,—all this depends on the number of extraordinary, supernatural works which he performs. Thus a spiritual hierarchy is created. There exists a hierarchy in the world of angels, and a hierarchy in the ecclesiastical organization, but there is a hierarchy also among the saints on earth and the blessed in heaven. In an ascending scale the saints, divided into orders and ranks, draw near to God, and in proportion as they become partakers of the divine nature are admitted to the worship and adoration of the deity.

In view of what has been said it is evident that truth, grace and good works bear, according to Rome, a specific, supernatural character. And because the Church is the God-appointed depository of all these blessings, the relation between grace and nature coincides with that between the Church and the world. The world, the state, natural life, marriage and culture are not sinful in themselves; only they are of a lower order, of a secular nature, and, unless consecrated by the Church, easily become an occasion for sinning. This determines the function of the Church with reference to the world. It is the calling of the Church to declare unto the world that in itself the world is

profane, but that nevertheless, through the consecration of the Church, it may become a vehicle of grace. Renunciation of the world and sovereignty over the world with Rome spring from one and the same principle. The celibacy of the priesthood and the elevation of marriage to the rank of a sacrament are branches of the same stem. The whole hierarchical idea is built on the sharp distinction between nature and grace. Where the supernatural character of the Church and the efficacy of the sacrament and the priestly office are concerned, this system brooks neither compromise nor concession; but aside from this, it leaves room for a great variety of steps and grades, of ranks and orders in holiness and salvation. The Church contains members that belong to it in body only, and members belonging to it with a part of their powers or with all their powers; it makes concessions to the weak and worships the saints; a lax morality and a severe asceticism, an active and a contemplative mode of life, rationalism and supernaturalism, unbelief and superstition equally find a place within its walls.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages this system had become corrupt in almost every respect. In the sphere of truth it had degenerated into nominalistic scholasticism; in the sphere of grace into demoralizing traffic in indulgences; in the sphere of good works into the immoral life of priests and monks. Numerous efforts were made to remedy these faults and to reform the Church from within. But the Reformation of the sixteenth century differed from all these attempts in that it not merely opposed the Roman system in its excrescences but attacked it internally in the foundations on which it rested and in the principles out of which it had been developed. The Reformation rejected the entire system, and substituted for it a totally different conception of *veritas*, *gratia*, and *bona opera*. It was led to this new conception not through scientific reflections or philosophical speculations, but through earnest, heartfelt concern for

the salvation of souls and the glory of God. The Reformation was a religious and ethical movement through and through. It was born out of the distress of Luther's soul.

When a helpless man, out of distress of soul, looks to the Gospel for deliverance, the Gospel will appear to him in a totally new light. All at once it ceases to be a set of supernatural, inscrutable mysteries to be received on ecclesiastical authority, with renunciation of the claims of reason, by meritorious assent. It straightway becomes a new Gospel, good tidings of salvation, revelation of God's gracious and efficacious will to save the sinner, something that itself imparts the forgiveness of sin and eternal life and therefore is embraced by lost man with joy, that lifts him above all sin and above the entire world to the high hope of a heavenly salvation. Hence it is no longer possible to speak of the Gospel with Rome as consisting of supernatural mysteries to be responded to by man in voluntary assent. The Gospel is not law, neither as regards the intellect nor as regards the will; it is in essence a promise, not a demand but a gift, a free gift of the divine favor; nay, in it the divine will itself through the Gospel addresses itself to the will, the heart, the innermost essence of man, and there produces the faith which rests in this divine will and builds on it and puts its trust in it through all perils, even in the hour of death.

By reason of this new conception of the Gospel, which in principle was but a return to the old, Scriptural conception, it could not be otherwise than that faith also should obtain a totally new significance. If the Gospel is not a *veritas* to which the *gratia* is added later on, but is itself *gratia* in its very origin, the revelation of God's gracious will, and at the same time the instrument for making this will effective in the heart of man, then faith can no longer remain a purely intellectual assent. It must become the confidence in the

gracious will of God, produced by God himself in man's heart; a surrender of the whole man to the divine grace; a resting in the divine promise; a receiving of a part in God's favor; admission into communion with him; an absolute assurance of salvation. With Rome, faith is but one of the seven preparations, which lead on to the reception of the *gratia infusa* in baptism, and hence bears no religious character; it is naught but a *fides historica*, which stands in need of the supplement of love in order to become complete and sufficient unto salvation. To the Reformers faith from its very first inception is religious in nature. As *fides justificans salvifica* it differs not in degree but in principle and essence from the *fides historica*. It has for its object God himself, God in Christ, and Christ in the garb of Holy Scripture, *Christum Evangelio suo vestitum*; it is in its essence *firma certa que cognitio, cordis magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiae*, to be defined rather as *certitudo* than as *apprehensio*. Faith places beyond doubt *Dei bonitatem perspicue nobis propositam* and enables us to stand before God's presence *tranquillis animis*. Thus it is seen to be the principle of the true fear of God, for *primus ad pietatem gradus [est] agnoscere Deum esse nobis Patrem, ut nos tueatur, gubernet ac foveat, donec colligat in aeternam haereditatem regni sui*.

To all the Reformers, therefore, there lies behind the Gospel and behind faith the gracious and efficacious will of God. Nay, more than this, in the Gospel and in faith the divine will is revealed and realized. This is the reason why the religious conception of the Gospel and of faith is with the Reformers most intimately connected with their belief in predestination. We in our time no longer understand this. We have lost the habit of religious thinking, because we feel less for ourselves the personal need of communion with God, and so feel less of the impulse to interpret the world from a religious point of view. Instead, our age has learned to think in the terms of

natural science; it has substituted for the divine will the omnipotent law and the omnipotent force of nature, and thus thrown itself into the arms of determinism. It claims to have long since outgrown the belief in predestination. And undoubtedly there exists between these two, however often they may be mixed and confounded, a difference of principle. Determinism is in principle rationalistic; it cherishes the delusion of being able to explain everything from the reign of natural law, holding that all existing things are rational since reason perceives that they could not be otherwise than they actually are. Predestination, on the other hand, is a thoroughly religious conception. While able to recognize natural law and to reckon with the forces of nature, it refuses to rest in this or to consider natural necessity the first and last word of history.

He who has learned to regard communion with God as the supreme good for his own person, must feel bound to work his way back, behind the world and all its phenomena, until he arrives at the will of God. He must seek an explanation of the origin, development and goal of the world-process, which shall be in accordance with that will and hence bear an ethico-religious character. This is the reason that, so soon as a religious movement appears in history, the problem of predestination comes to the front. In a way, this is true of all religions, but it applies with special pertinence to the history of the Christian religion. In proportion as the Christian religion is distinctly experienced and appreciated in its essence as true, full religion, as pure grace, it will also be felt to include, and that directly, without the need of dialectic deduction, the confession of predestination. Hence all the Reformers were agreed on this point. It is true that with Luther it was afterwards, for practical reasons, relegated to the background, but even he never recanted or denied it. It was in the controversy about the *servum* or *liberum arbitrium* that the Reformation and humanism parted ways once for all. Erasmus was

and continued to be a Romanist in spite of his ridicule of the monks. As late as 1537 Luther wrote to Capito: *nullum agnosco meum justum librum nisi forte de libero arbitrio et catechismum*. The doctrine of predestination, therefore, is no discovery of Calvin; before Calvin it had been professed by Luther and Zwingli. It sprang spontaneously from the religious experience of the Reformers. If Calvin introduced any modification, it consists in this, that he freed the doctrine from the semblance of harshness and arbitrariness and imparted to it a more purely ethico-religious character.

For, all affinity and agreement notwithstanding, Calvin differed from Luther and Zwingli. He shared neither the emotional nature of the one nor the humanistic inclinations of the other. When, in a manner as yet but very imperfectly known to us, he was converted, this experience was immediately accompanied by such a clear, deep and harmonious insight into Christian truth as to render any subsequent modification unnecessary. The first edition of the *Institutio* which appeared in March, 1536, was expanded and increased in the later issues, but it never changed, and the task which, in his view, the Reformation had to accomplish, remained from beginning to end his own goal in life. While Luther's faith was almost entirely absorbed in the *fides justificans*, and while Zwingli one-sidedly defined faith as *fides vivificans* or *regenerans*, Calvin widened the conception to that of *fides salvificans*,—a faith which renews the entire man in his being and consciousness, in soul and body, in all his relations and activities, and hence a faith which exercises its sanctifying influence in the entire range of life, upon Church and school, upon society and state, upon science and art. But in order to be able to perform this comprehensive task,—in order to be truly, always and everywhere a *fides salvificans*, it was necessary for faith first of all to be fully assured of itself, and no longer to be tossed to and fro by every wind

of doubt. This explains why, more than with Zwingli and Luther, faith is with Calvin unshaken conviction, firm assurance.

But if faith is to be such an unshaken assurance it must rest on a truth removed from all possibility of doubt; it must attest itself as real by its own witness and power in the heart of man. A house that will defy the tempest cannot be built on the sand. Behind faith, therefore, must lie the truth, the will and act of God. In other words, faith is the fruit or effect of election; it is the experience of an act of God. Always and everywhere Calvin recurs to this will of God. The world with its infinite multitude of phenomena, with its diversities and inequalities, its disharmonies and contrasts, is not to be explained from the will of the creature nor from the worth or unworthiness of man. It is true, inequality and contrast appear most pronounced in the allotment of man's eternal destiny. They are, however, by no means confined to this, but show themselves in every sphere, in the different places of habitation appointed for men, in the different gifts and powers conferred upon them in body and soul, in the difference between health and sickness, wealth and poverty, prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, in the varying ranks and vocations, and, last of all, in the fact itself that men are men and not animals. Let the opponents of the doctrine of election, therefore, answer the question, *cur homines sint magis quam boves aut asini, cur, quum in Dei manu esset canes ipsos fingere, ad imaginem suam formavit*. The more we reflect upon the world the more we are forced to fall back upon the hidden will of God and find in it the ultimate ground for both the existence of the world and its being what it is. All the standards of goodness and justice and righteous recompense and retribution for evil which we are accustomed to apply, prove wholly inadequate to measure the world. The will of God is, and from the nature of the case must be, the deepest cause of the entire world and of all the *varietas* and *diversitas* found in it.

There is no more ultimate ground for this than the *absconditum Dei consilium*. The unfathomable mystery of the world compels the intellect and the heart, theology and philosophy alike to fall back upon the will of God and seek rest in it.

It frequently happens, however, that theology and philosophy are not contented with this. They then endeavor, after the manner of Plato and Hegel, to offer a rational explanation of the world. Or, while falling back upon the will of God, they make out of this will a buqoj a`gnwstoj, as is done by Gnosticism, or a blind, irrational and unhappy will, as is done by Schopenhauer, or an unconscious and unknowable power, as is done by von Hartmann and Spencer. By his Christian faith Calvin was kept from these different forms of pantheism. It is true, Calvin upholds with the utmost energy the sovereignty of the divine will over and against all human reasoning. Predestination belongs to the *divinae sapientiae adyta* which man may not enter and in regard to which his curiosity must remain unsatisfied; for they form a labyrinth from which no one can find the exit. Man may not even investigate with impunity the things God meant to keep secret. God wants us to adore, not to comprehend, the majesty of His wisdom. Nevertheless God is not *exlex*. He sufficiently vindicates His justice by convicting of guilt those who blaspheme Him in their own consciences. His will is not absolute power, but *ab omni vitio pura, summa perfectionis regula, etiam legum omnium lex*. And the Gospel reveals to us what is the content, the heart and the kernel, as it were, of this will.

For since the Fall nature no longer reveals to us God's paternal favor. On every side it proclaims the divine curse which cannot but fill our guilty souls with despair. *Ex mundi conspectu Patrem colligere non licet*. Aside from the special revelation in Christ, man has no true knowledge of heavenly things. He is ignorant and blind as respects

God, His fatherhood and His law as the rule of life. Especially of the *divinae erga nos benevolentiae certitudo* he is without the faintest consciousness, for human reason neither can attain nor strives to attain to this truth, and therefore fails to understand *quis sit verus Deus, qualisve erga nos esse velit*. And herein precisely consists the essence of God's special revelation in Christ, and this is the central content of the Gospel: God here makes Himself known to us not merely as our *Creator*, but as our *Redemptor*. He does not here tell us what He is, to enable us to indulge in speculation, but causes us to know *qualis sit et quid ejus naturae conveniat*. The *gratuita promissio*, the *promissio misericordiae*, the *liberalis legatio qua sibi Deus mundum reconciliat*,—these constitute the essence of the Gospel and the firm foundation of faith. He is a true believer, who, firmly convinced that God is to him a gracious and loving Father, expects everything from His loving-kindness. *Fidelis non est, nisi qui suae salutis securitati innixus, diabolo et morti confidenter insultet*.

This concentration of the Gospel in the promise of divine mercy not only provided Calvin with a firm footing in the midst of the shifting opinions of his time, but also widened his outlook and enlarged his sympathies, so that, while resolutely standing by his own confession, he nevertheless perpetually mediated the things that made for unity and peace among all the sons of the Reformation. To be sure, the conception usually formed of Calvin differs widely from this. His image as commonly portrayed has for its only features those of cruel severity and despotic intolerance. But such a conception does grave injustice to the Genevan Reformer. Unfortunately, he must be held responsible for the death of Servetus, although in this respect he only stands on a level with the other Reformers, none of whom had entirely outgrown all the errors of their age. But the Calvin who gave his approval to the execution of Servetus is not the only Calvin we know. There is also a far different Calvin, one who was united with

his friends in the bonds of the most tender affection, whose heart went out in sympathy to all his suffering and struggling brethren in the faith, one who identified himself with their lot, and supplied them with comfort and courage and cheer in their severest afflictions. We know of a Calvin who without intermission labored most earnestly for the union of the divided Protestants, who sought God in His Word alone and was unwilling to bind himself even to such terms as "Trinity" and "Person", who refused to subscribe to the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, who discountenanced every disruption of the Church on the ground of minor impurities of doctrine, who favored fraternal tolerance in all questions touching the form of worship. There was a Calvin, who, notwithstanding all differences of opinion, cherished the highest regard for Luther, Melanchthon and Zwingli, and recognized them as servants of God; who himself subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and, reserving the right of private interpretation, acknowledged it as the expression of his own faith; who recommended the *Loci* of Melanchthon, although differing from him on the points of free-will and predestination; who refused to confine the invisible Church to any single confession, but recognized its presence wherever God works by His Word and Spirit in the hearts of men.

Still another injustice, however, must be laid to the charge of the average conception of Calvin. Men sometimes speak as if Calvin knew of nothing else to preach but the decree of predestination with its two parts of election and reprobation. The truth is that no preacher of the Gospel has ever surpassed Calvin in the free, generous proclamation of the grace and love of God. He was so far from putting predestination to the front, that in the *Institutio* the subject does not receive treatment until the third book, after the completion of the discussion of the life of faith. It is entirely wanting in the *Confessio* of 1536 and is only mentioned in passing, in

connection with the Church, in the *Catechismus Genevensis* of 1545. And as regards reprobation, before accusing Calvin, the charge should be laid against Scripture, against the reality of life, against the testimony of conscience; for all these bear witness that there is sin in the world, and that this awful reality, this *decretum horribile*, cannot have its deepest ground in the free will of man. And there are still other features in Calvin's doctrine of reprobation to which attention should be called. There is in the first place the fact that he says so little about the working of reprobation. The *Institutio* is a work characterized by great sobriety, wholly free from scholastic abstruseness; it everywhere treats the doctrines of faith in the closest connection with the practice of religion. This is especially true of eschatology. As is well known, Calvin never could bring himself to write a commentary on the Apocalypse, and in his *Institutio* he devotes to "the last things"; only a few paragraphs. He avoids all *spinosae quaestiones* with reference to the state of glory, and interprets the descriptions given by Scripture of the state of the lost as symbolical: darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth, unquenchable fire, the worm that dies not,—all these serve to impress upon us *quam sit calamitosum alienari ab omni Dei societate*, and *majestatem Dei ita sentire tibi adversam ut effugere nequeas quin ab ipsa urgearis*. The punishment of hell consists in exclusion from fellowship with God and admits of degrees. In connection with Paul's words, that at last God will be all in all, it is not forbidden to think of the devil and the godless, since in their subjection also the glory of God shall be revealed.

But of even greater significance is it that with Calvin reprobation does not mean the withholding of all grace. Although man through sin has been rendered blind to all the spiritual realities of the kingdom of God, so that a special revelation of God's fatherly love in Christ and a *specialis illuminatio* by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of

the sinners here become necessary, nevertheless there exists alongside of these a *generalis gratia* which dispenses to all men various gifts. If God had not spared man, his fall would have involved the whole of nature in ruin. As it was, God immediately after the Fall interposed, in order by His common grace to curb sin and to uphold in being the *universitas rerum*. For after all sin is rather an *adventitia qualitas* than a *substantialis proprietas*, and for this reason God is *operis sui corruptioni magis infensus quam operi suo*. Although for man's sake the whole of nature is subject to vanity, nevertheless nature is upheld by the hope which God implanted in its heart. There is no part of the world in which some spark of the divine glory does not glimmer. Though it be a metaphorical mode of expression, since God should not be confounded with nature, it may be affirmed in a truly religious sense that nature is God. Heaven and earth with their innumerable wonders are a magnificent display of the divine wisdom.

Especially the human race is still a clear mirror of the operation of God, an exhibition of His manifold gifts. In every man there is still a seed of religion, a consciousness of God, wholly ineradicable, convincing all of the heavenly grace on which their life depends, and leading even the heathen to name God the Father of mankind. The supernatural gifts have been lost, and the natural gifts have become corrupted, so that man by nature no longer knows who and what God seeks to be to him. Still these latter gifts have not been withdrawn entirely from man. Reason and judgment and will, however corrupt, yet, in so far as they belong to man's nature, have not been wholly lost. The fact that men are found either wholly or in part deprived of reason, proves that the title to these gifts is not self-evident and that they are not distributed to men on the basis of merit. Nonetheless, the grace of God imparts them to us. The reason whereby man distinguishes between truth and error, good and evil, and forms

conceptions and judgments, and also the will which is inseparable from human nature as the faculty whereby man strives after what he deems good for himself,—these raise him above the animals. Consequently it is contrary to Scripture as well as to experience to attribute to man such a perpetual blindness as would render him unable to form any true conception. On the contrary, there is light still shining in the darkness, men still retain a degree of love for the truth, some sparks of the truth have still been preserved. Men carry in themselves the principles of the laws which are to govern them individually and in their association with one another. They agree in regard to the fundamentals of justice and equity, and everywhere exhibit an aptness and liking for social order. Sometimes a remarkable sagacity is given to men whereby they are not only able to learn certain things, but also to make important inventions and discoveries, and to put these to practical use in life. Owing to all this, not only is an orderly civil society made possible among men, but arts and sciences develop, which are not to be despised. For these should be considered gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is true the Holy Spirit as a spirit of sanctification dwells in believers only, but as a spirit of life, of wisdom and of power He works also in those who do not believe. No Christian, therefore, should despise these gifts; on the contrary, he should honor art and science, music and philosophy and various other products of the human mind as *praestantissima Spiritus dona*, and make the most of them for his own personal use. Accordingly, in the moral sphere also distinctions are to be recognized between some men and others. While all are corrupt, not all are fallen to an equal depth; but there are sins of ignorance and sins of malice. There is a difference between Camillus and Catiline. Even to sinful man sometimes *speciosae dotes* and *speciales Dei gratiae* are granted. In common parlance it is even permissible to say that one man has been born *bene*, another *pravae naturae*. Nay, every man has to acknowledge in the talents entrusted to him a

specialis or *peculiaris Dei gratia*. In the diversity of all these gifts we see the remnants of the divine image whereby man is distinguished from all other creatures.

In view of all these utterances, which it would be easy to increase and enforce from the other works of Calvin, it is grossly unjust to charge the Reformer with narrow-mindedness and intolerance. It is, of course, a different question whether Calvin himself possessed talent and aptness for all these arts and sciences to which he accords praise. But even if this be not so, even if he did not possess the love for music and singing which distinguished Luther, this is not to his discredit, for not only has every genius its limitations, but the Reformers were and had to be by vocation men of faith, and for having excelled in this they deserve our veneration and praise, no less than the men of art and science. Calvin affirms, it is true, that the virtues of the natural man, however noble, do not suffice for justification at the judgment-bar of God, but this is due to his profound conviction of the majesty and spiritual character of the moral law. Aside from this, he is more generous in his recognition of what is true and good, wherever it be found, than any other Reformer. He surveys the entire earth and finds everywhere the evidence of the divine goodness, wisdom and power. Calvin's teleological standpoint does not render him narrow in his sympathies, but rather gives to his mind the stamp of catholicity.

This appears with equal clearness from the calling which he assigns to the Christian. In regard to this also Calvin takes his point of departure in the will of God. To the Romanist view he brings in principle the same objection that bears against the pagan conception: the doctrine of the meritoriousness of good works is a delusion; the monastic vows are an infringement of Christian liberty; the perfection striven after by this method is an arbitrary ideal, set

up by man himself. Romanism and paganism both minimize the corruption of human nature, and in the matter of good works start from the free will of man. In contradistinction to this Calvin proceeds on the principle: *nostri non sumus, Dei sumus*. The Christian's life ought to be one continual sacrifice, a perfect consecration to God, a service of God's name, obedience to His law, a pursuit of His glory. This undivided consecration to God assumes on earth largely the character of self-denial and cross-bearing. Paganism knows nothing of this; it merely prescribes certain moral maxims and strives to bring man's life into subjection to his reason or will, or to nature. But the Christian subjects also his intellect and his will and all his powers to the law of God. He does not resign himself to the inevitable, but commits himself to the heavenly Father, who is not like unto a philosopher preaching virtue, but is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The result is that for Calvin the passive virtues of submission, humility, patience, self-denial, cross-bearing stand in the foreground. Like St. Augustine, Calvin is mortally afraid of pride, whereby man exalts himself above God. His strong insistence upon the inability of man and the bondage of the will is not for the purpose of plunging man into despair, but in order to raise him from his lethargy and to awaken in him the longing for what he lacks, to make him renounce all self-glorifying and self-reliance and put all his confidence in God alone. Calvin strips man of everything in order to restore unto him all things in God. *Quanto magis in te infirmus es, tanto magis te suscipit Dominus; nostra humilitas ejus altitudo*. *Humilitas* thus becomes the first virtue; it grows on the root of election; we are continually taught it by God in all the adversity and crucifixion of the present life; it places us for the first time in the proper relation towards God and our fellowman. For it reconciles us to the fact that this life is for us a land of pilgrimage, full of perils and

afflictions, and teaches us to surrender ourselves in all things to the will of God: *Dominus ita voluit, ergo ejus voluntatem sequamur*. It likewise teaches us to love our neighbor, to value the gifts bestowed upon him and to employ our own gifts for his benefit.

Still it would be a mistake to imagine that according to Calvin the Christian life is confined to the practice of the passive virtues. It is true, he often speaks of despising the present and contemplating the future life. But on considering the times in which Calvin lived, the persecution and oppression to which the Reformation was exposed in well-nigh every country, the bodily and mental suffering the Reformer himself had to endure,—on considering all this we cannot wonder that he exhorts the faithful before all things to the exercise of humility and submission, to patience and obedience, to self-denial and cross-bearing. This has always been so in the Christian Church, and may be traced back to the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. It does not speak favorably for the depth and intensity of our spiritual life, if we are inclined to find fault with Calvin, the other Reformers, and the martyrs of the Church for this alleged one-sidedness of their faith. It rather should excite our admiration that, in the midst of such circumstances, they so largely kept still an eye open for the positive vocation of the Christian. With Calvin at least the reverse side to the attitude thus criticized is not wanting. Nor does it appear merely after an incidental fashion, by way of appendix to his ethics; it is the outcome of his own most individual principle; its root again lies in his conception of the will of God.

As is universally acknowledged, we owe to Luther the restoration of man's natural calling to a place of honor. Calvin, however, carried this principle enunciated by his predecessors to its furthest consequences. He viewed the whole of life from the standpoint of the will of God and placed it in all its extent under the discipline of the

divine law. It was the common conviction of the Reformers that Christian perfection must be realized not above and outside of, but within the sphere of the calling assigned us by God here on earth. Perfection consists neither in compliance with arbitrary human or ecclesiastical commandments, nor in the performance of all sorts of extraordinary activities. It consists in the faithful discharge of their ordinary daily duties which have been laid by God upon every man in the conduct of life. But much more strongly than Luther, Calvin emphasizes the idea that life itself in its whole length and breadth and depth must be a service of God. Life acquires for him a religious character, is subsumed under and becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Or, as Calvin himself repeatedly formulates it: Christian life is always and everywhere a life in the presence of God, a walking before His face,—*coram ipso ambulare, ac si essemus sub ejus oculis*.

When, therefore, Calvin speaks of despising the present life, he means by this something far different from what was meant by medieval ethics. He does not mean that life ought to be fled from, suppressed, or mutilated, but wishes to convey the idea that the Christian should not give his heart to this vain, transitory life, but should possess everything as not possessing it, and put his confidence in God alone. But life in itself is a *benedictio Dei* and comprises many *divina beneficia*. It is for believers a means to prepare them for the heavenly salvation. It should be hated only *quatenus nos peccato teneat obnoxios*, and this hatred should never relate to life as such. On the contrary, this life and the vocation in it given us by God are a part which we have no right to abandon, but which without murmuring and impatience we must faithfully guard, so long as God Himself does not relieve us. So to view life, as a *vocatio Dei*,—this is the first principle, the foundation of all moral action; this imparts unity to our life and symmetry to all its parts; this assigns to each one his individual place and task, and provides

the precious comfort *quod nullum erit tam sordidum ac vile opus, quod non coram Deo resplendeat et pretiosissimum habeatur.*

Thus Calvin sees the whole of life steeped in the light of the divine glory. As in all nature there is no creature which does not reflect the divine perfection, so in the rich world of men there is no vocation so simple, no labor so mean, as not to be suffused with the divine splendor and subservient to the glory of God's name. And Calvin applies this point of view to a still wider range. All the possessions of life are after the same manner rescued from the dishonor to which ascetic moralism had abandoned them. To be sure, he protests against defiling the conscience in the use of these possessions and insists upon it that the Christian should be actuated by *praesentis vitae contemptu et immortalitatis meditatione.* But he maintains with equal emphasis that all these possessions are gifts of God, designed not merely to provide for our necessities, but also bestowed for our enjoyment and delight. When God adorns the earth with trees and plants and flowers, when He causes the vine to grow which makes glad the heart of man, when He permits man to dig from out the earth the precious metals and stones which shine in the light of the sun,—all this proves that God does not mean to restrict the use of earthly possessions to the relief of our absolute necessities, but has given them to man also for enjoyment of life. Prosperity, abundance and luxury also are gifts of God, to be enjoyed with gratitude and moderation. And Calvin does not want to bind the conscience with regard to this to rigid rules, but expects it freely to regulate itself by the general principles laid down in Scripture for this purpose.

It must be admitted that the Reformer of Geneva did not always adhere in practice consistently to this golden rule. Instead of leaving room for individual liberty he endeavored to bring the entire compass of life under definite rules. The Consistory had for its task

invigilare gregi Domini ut Deus pure colatur and had to exercise censorship over every improper word and every wrong act; it had to watch over orthodoxy and church-attendance, to be on the lookout for Romish customs and wordily amusements, to oversee domestic life and the education of children; it had to keep its eyes on the tradesman in his store, on the craftsman in his workshop, on the merchant in the market-place, and to subject the entire range of life to the strictest discipline. Even regulations for fire-departments and night-watches, for market-facilities and street-cleaning, for trade and industry, for the prosecution of law-suits and the administration of justice are to be found among Calvin's writings. It is possible to justify all these measures in view of the circumstances under which they were introduced in Geneva. But nobody can deny that Calvin went too far in the creation of a moral police of this kind, that he introduced a régime which, while perhaps necessary and productive of excellent results for that age, is yet unsuited to other times and to different conditions.

But this criticism of Calvin's practice by no means detracts from the glory of the principle proclaimed by him. What he advocates in imitation of Zwingli was not a mere religious and ecclesiastical reform, but a moral reformation embracing the whole of life. Both Zwingli and Calvin waged war not merely against the Judaistic self-righteousness of the Roman Church, but assailed with equal vigor all pagan license. Both desired a national life in all its parts inspired and directed by the principles of the divine Word. And both were led to this view by their theological principle; they took their point of departure in all their thought and activity in God, walked with Him through all of life and brought back to God as an offering all they were and had. Behind everything the sovereign will of God lies hidden and works. The content, the kernel of this will is made known to us in the Gospel; from it we know that God is a merciful and

gracious Father, who in spite of all opposition proposes to Himself the salvation of the Church, the redemption of the world, the glorification of His perfections. But this will of God is not an impotent desire, it is omnipotent energy. It realizes itself in the faith of the elect; true faith is an experience of the work of God in one's soul, and for this reason affords unshakable assurance, immovable confidence, the power to surmount all pain and peril through communion with God. Through this gracious and omnipotent will of God is made known in the Gospel alone and experienced in faith only, nevertheless it does not stand isolated, but is encompassed, supported and reinforced by the operation of the same will in the world at large. Special grace is encircled by common grace; the vocation which comes to us in faith is connected and connects us with the vocation presented to us in our earthly calling; the election revealed to us in faith through this faith communicates its power to our entire life; the God of creation and of regeneration is one. Hence the believer cannot rest contented in his faith, but must make it the point of vantage from which he mounts up to the source of election and presses forward to the conquest of the entire world.

History has demonstrated that the belief in election, provided it be genuine, that is, a heartfelt conviction of faith, does not produce careless or Godless men. Especially as developed and professed by Calvin, it is a principle which cuts off all Romish error at the root. Whereas with Rome special revelation consists primarily in the disclosure of certain mysteries, with Calvin it receives for its content the gracious fatherly will of God realizing itself through the Word of revelation. With Rome faith is nothing more than an intellectual assent, preparing man for grace on the principle of *meritum congrui*; with Calvin faith is the reception of grace itself, experience of the power of God, undoubting assurance of God, through and through religious in its nature. With Rome grace chiefly serves the purpose of

strengthening the will of man and qualifying him for the performance of various meritorious good works prescribed by the Church; with Calvin the grace received through faith raises man to the rank of an organ of the divine will and causes him to walk in accordance with this will before the presence of God and for the divine glory. The Reformation as begun by Luther and Zwingli, and reinforced and carried through by Calvin, put an end to the Romish supernaturalism and dualism and asceticism. The divine will which created the world, which in the state of sin preserves it through common grace and makes itself known through special grace as the will of a merciful and gracious Father, aims at the salvation of the world, and itself through its omnipotent energy brings about this salvation. Because it thus placed the whole of life under the control of the divine will, it was possible for Calvin's ethics to fall into two precise regulations, into rigorism and puritanism; but in principle his ethics is diametrically opposed to all asceticism, it is catholic and universal in its scope.

In order to prove this by one striking example attention may be called to the fact that medieval ethics consistently disapproved the principle of usury on the ground of its being forbidden by Scripture and contrary to the unproductive nature of money. Accordingly it looked with contempt upon trade and commerce. Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli and Erasmus adhered to this view, but Calvin, when this important problem had been submitted to him, formulated in a classic document the grounds on which it could be affirmed that a reasonable interest is neither in conflict with Scripture nor with the nature of money. He took into account the law of life under which commerce operates and declared that only the sins of commerce are to be frowned upon, whereas commerce itself is to be regarded as a calling well-pleasing to God and profitable to society. And this merely illustrates the point of view from which Calvin habitually

approached the problems of life. He found the will of God revealed not merely in Scripture, but also in the world, and he traced the connection and sought to restore the harmony between them. Under the guidance of the divine Word he distinguished everywhere between the institution of God and human corruption, and then sought to establish and restore everything in harmony with the divine nature and law. Nothing is unclean in itself; every part of the world and every calling in life is a revelation of the divine perfections, so that even the humblest day laborer fulfills a divine calling. This is the democratic element in the doctrine of Calvin: there is with God no acceptance of persons; all men are equal before Him; even the humblest and meanest workman, if he be a believer, fills a place in the Kingdom of God and stands as a colaborer with God in His presence. But—and this is the aristocratic, reverse side to the democratic view—every creature and every calling has its own peculiar nature: Church and state, the family and society, agriculture and commerce, art and science are all institutions and gifts of God, but each in itself is a special revelation of the divine will and therefore possesses its own nature. The unity and the diversity in the whole world alike point back to the one sovereign, omnipotent, gracious and merciful will of God.

In this spirit Calvin labored in Geneva. But his activity was not confined to the territory of one city. Geneva was to Calvin merely the center, from which he surveyed the entire field of the Reformation in all lands. When his only child was taken away from him by death, he consoled himself with the thought that God had given him numerous children after the Spirit. And so it was indeed. Through an extensive correspondence he kept in touch with his fellow-laborers in the work of the Reformation; all questions were referred to him; he was the councillor of all the leaders of the great movement; he taught hundreds of men and trained them in his spirit. From all quarters

refugees came to Geneva, that bulwark against Rome, to seek protection and support, and afterwards returned to their own lands inspired with new courage. Thus Calvin created in many lands a people who, while made up from all classes, nobles and plain citizens, townspeople and countryfold, were yet one in the consciousness of a divine vocation. In this consciousness they took up the battle against tyranny in Church and state alike, and in that contest secured liberties and rights which are still ours at the present day. Calvin himself stood in the forefront of this battle. Life and doctrine with him were one. He gave his body a living, holy sacrifice, well-pleasing unto God through Jesus Christ. Therein consisted his reasonable service. *Cor Deo mactatum offero.*

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