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Part 1 - 1940

Chapter V: The Knowledge of God

25: The Fulfillment of the Knowledge of God

The knowledge of God occurs in the fulfillment of the revelation of the word of God by the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the reality and with the necessity of faith and its obedience. Its content is the existence of God, whom we must fear above all things because we may love God above all things; who remains a mystery to us because God has made the divine self so clear and certain to us.

1. Humanity before God

If the life of the church is not just a semblance, the knowledge of God is realized in it. This is the presupposition that we have first to explain in the doctrine of God. We have to learn how far we can know God and therefore speak and hear about God.

Barth believes this entire chapter works out the implications of Anselm in *Proslogium* 2-4.

CHAPTER II.

Truly there is a God, although the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

AND so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe. And indeed, we

believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. Or is there no such nature, since the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God? (Psalms xiv. 1). But, at any rate, this very fool, when he hears of this being of which I speak --a being than which nothing greater can be conceived --understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding; although he does not understand it to exist.

For, it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists. When a painter first conceives of what he will afterwards perform, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand it to be, because he has not yet performed it. But after he has made the painting, he both has it in his understanding, and he understands that it exists, because he has made it.

Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.

CHAPTER III.

God cannot be conceived not to exist. --God is that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. --That which can be conceived not to exist is not God.

AND it assuredly exists so truly, that it cannot be conceived not to exist. For, it is possible to conceive of a being which cannot be conceived not to exist; and this is greater than one which can be conceived not to exist. Hence, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, can be conceived not to exist, it is not that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. But this is an irreconcilable contradiction. There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist; and this being thou art, O Lord, our God.

So truly, therefore, dost thou exist, O Lord, my God, that thou canst not be conceived not to exist; and rightly. For, if a mind could conceive of a being better than thee, the creature would rise above the Creator; and this is most absurd. And, indeed, whatever else there is, except thee alone, can be conceived not to exist. To thee alone, therefore, it belongs to exist more truly than all other beings, and hence in a higher degree than all others. For, whatever else exists does not exist so truly, and

hence in a less degree it belongs to it to exist. Why, then, has the fool said in his heart, there is no God (Psalms xiv. 1), since it is so evident, to a rational mind, that thou dost exist in the highest degree of all? Why, except that he is dull and a fool?

CHAPTER IV.

How the fool has said in his heart what cannot be conceived. -- A thing may be conceived in two ways: (1) when the word signifying it is conceived; (2) when the thing itself is understood As far as the word goes, God can be conceived not to exist; in reality he cannot.

BUT how has the fool said in his heart what he could not conceive; or how is it that he could not conceive what he said in his heart? since it is the same to say in the heart, and to conceive.

But, if really, nay, since really, he both conceived, because he said in his heart; and did not say in his heart, because he could not conceive; there is more than one way in which a thing is said in the heart or conceived. For, in one sense, an object is conceived, when the word signifying it is conceived; and in another, when the very entity, which the object is, is understood.

In the former sense, then, God can be conceived not to exist; but in the latter, not at all. For no one who understands what fire and water are can conceive fire to be water, in accordance with the nature of the facts themselves, although this is possible according to the words. So, then, no one who understands what God is can conceive that God does not exist; although he says these words in his heart, either without any or with some foreign, signification. For, God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived. And he who thoroughly understands this, assuredly understands that this being so truly exists, that not even in concept can it be non-existent. Therefore, he who understands that God so exists, cannot conceive that he does not exist.

I thank thee, gracious Lord, I thank thee; because what I formerly believed by thy bounty, I now so understand by thine illumination, that if I were unwilling to believe that thou dost exist, I should not be able not to understand this to be true.

The only legitimate and meaningful questions in this context are the following.

How far can human beings know God? How far is God knowable? These questions are legitimate and meaningful because they are genuine questions of church proclamation, and therefore genuine questions of dogmatics. How human beings know God and how God is knowable has to be a matter of continual reflection and appraisal for the teaching church, and one has to say it continually to the hearing church so that one may call it to

new witness. The knowledge of God with which we are here concerned takes place, not in a free choice, but with a very definite constraint. It stands or falls with its one definite object. Because it is bound to the Word of God given to the church, the knowledge of God with which we are here concerned is bound to the God who in the Word gives knowledge of God to the church for human beings to know the true God. Bound in this way, it is the true knowledge of the true God. Uncertainty will never be possible in this constraint of the Word of God and therefore in the knowledge of the God revealed therein. On the other hand, certainty will never be possible in freedom from the Word of God and therefore in the alleged knowledge of God that rests upon a free choice of this or that "God." It will presuppose the reality and possibility of the knowledge of God as grounded in itself and as already distinguished from the unreal and impossible knowledge of all false gods. Therefore, in its polemic against them it will have to show, not that they are false gods, but only to what extent they are false gods. God shown in the Word as the true God has already manifested the fact that they are false gods. It will testify both to the truth of the true God and to the falsity of the false gods simply on the ground that these facts are previously and finally testified by the Word of God and need from the church only this repetitive and confirmative witness. That the knowledge of God in its fulfillment by the revelation of the Word of God is bound to its one, determined and uniquely distinct object means that God enters into the relationship of object to the human being as the subject. God gives himself to humanity in the Word as a real object. God makes humanity accessible for God. God lets humanity consider and conceive of God. God seeks us in the Word. It is really not the case, therefore, that if we have a knowledge of God in the form of that experience, we have reached a higher or the highest step on a way which began with an objective perceiving, viewing and conceiving of God,

as though that were only an early and sensuous mode of thought. The fact that humanity stands before the God who allows human beings to know God in the medium of the Word, means that we have to understand humanity's knowledge of God as the knowledge of faith.

We must now discuss the assertion that the knowledge of God is the knowledge of faith. In the first instance, faith is the total positive relationship of humanity to the God humanity knows in the Word. Faith is humanity's act of turning to God, of opening up human life to God, and of surrendering to God. Faith is the Yes that humanity pronounces in the heart when confronted by this God, to whom humanity knows itself bound. Faith is the obligation in which, before God, and in the light of the clarity that God is God and that God is God of this human being, to the point where the human being knows and explains him or her as belonging to God. We must describe faith as knowledge. The turning, the self-opening, the surrender in faith, the Yes of faith, faith as obligation, love, trust and obedience in faith, all this presupposes and includes within itself the union and the distinction that humanity fulfills between self and the God whose existence and nature make it all possible and necessary. The orientation that unites and distinguishes is the knowledge of God in faith. Without it, faith could not be all those other things as well. As knowledge, it is the orientation of humanity to God as an object. In the Bible, faith means the opening up of human subjectivity by and for the objectivity of the divine, and in this opening up the re-establishment and re-determination of human subjectivity. If God is not object in this particularity, there will be no knowledge of God at all. God is not God if human beings consider and conceive God as one in a series of like objects. The primary objectivity of God is the divine reality, as it exists in Trinity. The secondary objectivity of God is the objectivity that God has for human beings in

revelation, in which God offers the divine self in such a way that human beings know God consistent with the self-knowledge of God. The difference is that of the particular form of this objectivity suitable to human beings. For human beings, the objectivity of God is mediate. God meets us under the sign and veil of other objects. In, with, and under the sign and veil of these other objects we believe in God and pray to God. We believe in God in clothed objectivity. That we know God in faith has a double significance. God stands before humanity as object. Knowledge of God in faith is always this indirect knowledge of God, knowledge of God in the works of God, and in these particular words. Faith differs from unbelief, erroneous faith, and superstition in that faith is content with this indirect knowledge of God. Faith does not think that the knowledge of God in the works of God is insufficient. Faith is grateful to know the real God in the works of God. Faith knows God by means of the objects chosen by God. This knowledge of faith, attested in both Old and New Testaments, is the knowledge of God from the works of God, is also the content of knowledge in the message of the church of Jesus Christ. The position of the human being before God is one of grace. Either knowledge of God as knowledge of faith occurs in this position or it does not take place at all. We have all other objects as the pre-arranged disposition and pre-arranged mode of our existence determines them. This is so because we first consciously have ourselves. The problematic of this two-fold having – of ourselves and of our objects – and the philosophical ambiguity of this correlation, the claim of our own precedence will always, in some form or other, be awake and valid and plead for consideration. Only because God posits God as the object does humanity have the privilege of being a knower of God. Humanity can only have God as the self-positing object. It is and remains God's free grace when God is object for us in both the primary and secondary objectivity of God. God always gives the

divine self for us to know God in this giving, which is always a bestowal, always a free action. Faith stands or falls with the fact of the action of God directing humanity. God directs humanity to God, the living Lord, the actual being of God. The knowledge of God by faith is therefore concerned with God and with God alone. Humanity knows God because God reveals God as such in the works of God. God willingly makes new beginnings with humanity. God is effectual in the works of God. This is the content of the New Testament picture of humanity standing before God and knowing God.

The final point is that, in view of all this, what becomes of the knowing human being? The knowing human being, the faith of this person as direction to God, the human self-distinction from God and self-union with God, all follows upon the previous action of God. Knowledge of God as knowledge of faith is in itself obedience. Faith is an act of human decision corresponding to the act of divine decision, the act of the divine being as the living Lord, and the act of grace in which faith has its ground. In this act, God posits God as our object and us as those who know God. However, the fact that God does so means that our knowing God can consist only in our following this act, in us becoming a correspondence of this act, in us as considering and conceiving and becoming corresponding to the divine act. This is obedience of faith.

To summarize, we started out from the fact that we are concerned with the problem of the knowledge of God as bound to the Word of God. The task we set ourselves was to understand how this happened. We first established that it is as such objective and real knowledge. It is not identical with God, but it has its object in God. This knowledge is the knowledge of faith, in which God becomes object to humanity. This knowledge is a particular, separating and sanctifying object distinguishing between itself and the knowing humanity, so that we have to understand knowledge of God

necessarily as an event outstanding in its relationship to other events. We saw that this objectivizing of God always occurs concretely in the use of a medium, in the putting on of a veil, in the form of a work of God; and therefore knowledge of God occurs in the fact that people make use of this medium. However, we are not to think of this medium as apart from the grace in which God the Lord controls this medium, uses this medium, and is itself the power of this medium. We can only understand this knowledge of God as the bestowal and reception of this free grace of God. Finally, one can fulfill this knowledge of God only in our relationship to this act, and therefore only in an act, the act that is the decision of obedience to God.

2. God before Humanity

This analysis has shown us all along the line that we can understand the standing of humanity before God only as a second act. This first act is its presupposition, determination, and restriction. One can fulfill the second act only in confirmation and acknowledgement of this first act. However, this first act consists in God standing before humanity. If God does have the precedence, how can humanity take even a single step forward? God encounters humanity in such a way that in this encounter God is and remains God and thus rises up humanity to be a knower of God. That this is the case is God's own being and work, which humanity can only follow. If we want to clarify as to what humanity is and does when humanity knows God, step by step we need clarity as to whom God is and what the God humanity knows does. If we want to see how humanity stands before God, we have to see how God stands before humanity. My thesis is this: The existence of God, whom we must fear above all things because we may love God above all things, remains a mystery to us because God has made God so clear and certain to us. This is God before humanity, God as God encounters humanity and acts towards

humanity according to the knowledge of God as bound to the Word of God. God is the One whom we ought to fear above all and ought to love above all is decisive and definitive for everything that we can say about what humanity can know about God. God is the One whom we may love above all things. God exists, and is the object of our knowledge, as the One whom we ought to love above all things. To be bound to the Word of God means that we may love above all things the One who speaks this Word to us. We emphasize the word “may.” Binding to the love of God is permission, liberation, and authorization. We do not yet believe, trust, obey, or have faith, if our love to God is not an exercise of this permission. The permission with which we have concern is three-fold. First, it consists in the fact that God is the One who is worthy of our love, so that in loving God disappointment does not await us. Second, the permission consists in the fact that God offers knowledge of God to us, so that we can in fact love God as the One who exists for us and will bring human beings to love God. Third, it consists in the fact that God creates in us the possibility, willingness, and readiness, to know God. God is the One whom we must fear above all things because we may love God above all things. We must fear above all things the One who speaks this Word to us. This time, the emphasis falls upon the word “must.” The compulsion of which we speak is three-fold. First in that because God is who God is, we ought to fear God, so that escape from God is unimaginable. Second, it consists in the fearful encounter with God, so that God exists for us in such a way that it is obvious that God wills that we should fear God. Third, it consists in God opening our eyes and ears to the fearfulness of God, so that we realize our fear before God. God stands before humanity as the One whom human beings may love and must fear above all things. God stands before humanity as the One whom human beings may and must love in such a way that there is no other love and fear and therefore

no other permission and compulsion. Fear and love are the two concepts that Luther used in his Smaller Catechism, even if I want to reverse the order from that of Luther.

Knowledge of God is in obedience to God. This obedience is not that of a slave but of a child. It is not blind but seeing. It is not coerced but free. The New Testament does not suggest that faith needs obedience to find its completion. The only alternative is to understand faith as obedience, to the extent that we now distinguish faith from any other sort of trust of the heart by grounding it in the must of the fear of God that is inseparable from the may of to God.

We need to consider a second pair of concepts. The One whom we must fear and may love remains a mystery to us because God has made the divine self so clear and certain to us. The clarity and certainty in which God offers the divine self to us correspond to love towards God, as God permits us to have it. How can there be reconciliation if there is no revelation? Faith means receiving God's revelation. By receiving God's revelation, we make use of the fact that we may love God. However, the mystery in which God offers the divine self to us corresponds to the fear that we must have before God. How can there be reconciliation without judgment, and so how can revelation be without mystery? We begin with the positive fact that God is the One who has made God clear and certain to us. We are bound to the existence of God on the strength of being bound to the Word. This does not mean that we have procured for ourselves in some way or other clarity and certainty about the existence of God. God makes God so clear and certain to us. So clear that we may love God and no longer be without God. God sees to it that God not only does not remain hidden from us, but is known so well that we know our existence only in that relationship of love and fear. Knowing ourselves, we must also know God. The acknowledgement of the fact that

revelation has taken place is faith, and the knowledge with which the revelation that has taken place begins is the knowledge of faith. For the knowledge of faith, the existence of God is the problem already solved in and by the clarity and certainty of the existence of God in His revelation. God is the One who remains a mystery to us. The true God does not stand before us unless God is and remains a mystery to us. Mystery suggests that we know God only because God himself to be known by us. In this clarity and certainty, we may refer to several texts in John 1:9, 1:4, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46, 6:69, 17:3, 14:6, and 14:9-10.

To summarize, where God stands before humanity as the One who awakens, creates, and upholds human faith, and where God offers the divine self to humanity as the object and content of the knowledge of his or her faith, God does it in this being and action. God is the One who remains mystery to us because God has made Himself so clear and certain to us. In this way, God awakens, creates, and upholds our knowledge of God as a work of obedience. Within obedience, one cannot destroy the knowledge of God, because God cannot cease to be the object of knowledge within this obedience. The truth of this rests in the fact that we do not begin with ourselves, but with God. We are not making God in our own image. We do not understand humanity in its own light. In all these determinations, we understand humanity as the one whom God sets before God. That fact that we know God only through God does not have a basis in an understanding of the capacity for knowledge. God speaks to humanity in the Word. Thereby, God gives the divine self to humanity so that humanity may know God. Therein, humanity knows God. In this covenant, and therefore through the Word of God which sets up this covenant, there is given to humanity all the truth and reality, the enlightenment and salvation that God has to say to humanity, that is bestowed by God upon the human being standing before God. Humanity for its part can then say and hear about God in the

church. Therefore, to know God in the Word means to know God as God is. The true God stands before humanity. Humanity knows God in this way or not all. In this Word, God is Lord, Creator, and the One who promises. God lets us know the true God in this self-demonstration. God is from eternity to eternity the triune God, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The fact that, humanity is indebted to God for everything and owes God everything has its ground in the eternal Fatherhood of God, of which any other fatherhood can be only an image and likeness. That self-demonstration constrains us to gratitude and indebtedness and to the knowledge of God the Father of our Lord, because in eternity God is the Father of the eternal Son and the source of the Holy Spirit. Further, the fact that according to this self-demonstration, God is and does everything for human beings who still owe everything to God has its ground in the reality that God is eternally the Son of the Father, eternally equal to the Father, and therefore eternally loved by the Father. That self-demonstration constrains us to adoration of the faithfulness and grace of God, and therefore to the knowledge of God the Son as our Lord, because in eternity God is the only Son, begotten of the Father who is also the source of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the fact that according to that self-demonstration God is the One from whom we have to expect everything has its ground in the fact that God is eternally the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and of one essence with them both. That self-demonstration constrains us to hope, and therefore to the knowledge of the Holy Spirit, because in eternity God is also the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, and their unity in love.

In this context, we can understand texts that speak of the hidden quality of God, in apparent contradiction of the revealed character of God. One thinks of Jeremiah 23:18, Isaiah 40:13-14, Job 15:8, Romans 11:33-34, I Timothy 6:16, John 1:18, I John 4:12,

John 4:37, and 6:46. By proceeding downwards from the triune existence of God, we can understand how God stands before us. God in revelation offers knowledge of God and we gain knowledge of God. If God unveils God to us, the revelation has the characteristic of revelation of the truth beside which there is no other and above which there is none higher. I know God in consequence of the fact that God knows me. I do not yet know God here and now as I already know God. Faith cleaves to God by cleaving to the work of God, taking place in the creaturely sphere. This work as such stands before us always as a fragment. That is, it is a provisional part or moment of the history of the covenant between God and us.

We must now try to reach a basic clarity about the nature of this limitation of our knowledge of God based on the revelation of God and the mode of faith.

First, when God offers knowledge of God to us as the triune God, God permits something God has created or an event in the time and place God created to speak for God. On the ground of and through its union with the Word of God, this creature is the supreme and outstanding work and sign of God. The existence of this creature in his unity with God means the promise that other creatures may attest in their objectivity what is real only in this creature, which is the objectivity of God. Note how the New Testament puts this in Revelation 3:14 and Colossians 1:15. What from the first point of view is simply the fulfilling and consequence of the incarnation, is, from the second, the accomplished selection of a creature by God's disposition and grace, and from the third, the promise given to the creature in general. When God becomes visible for us through it, God accepts the fact that God will remain invisible, as the One God knows as eternal Trinity. God becomes known to us, but in the means and sign that God uses to be known by us, and therefore in a means foreign and improper to the nature of God. When God

raises us into the reality of God through the speech of this creature, God lowers Himself to us. All of this is already true of the humanity of Jesus Christ. We might call this a sacramental reality, when there is unveiling there is also veiling. When God establishes divine lordship it means the self-humiliation and self-alienation of God. When God reveals the divine self, the revelation confirms divine hiddenness as well.

Second, the limitation of our knowledge of God, which is also its determination, consists in this: when God offers knowledge of God to us in the truth of the Trinity, what happens is this. Humanity knows God, from outside, for in an incomprehensible way there is an outside in relation to God, as Thou. We know God as God allows humanity to know God as Thou. However, we know God neither as God knows us nor as we know each other. We must not be surprised if we know God as Thou only in such a way that at the same time God remains unknown to us as I. We can see this sacramental reality of God in Exodus 3, where God meets Moses in the form of a thorn bush that burns without burning away. It becomes holy ground because God meets Moses there, in a sign of the presence of God. We have no objective definition of God except as God permits human beings to know God within a human world.

Third, we shall now try to see and understand the same order along a third line of approach. When God allows human beings to know God as the triune God, God lowers this divine self to the time human beings experience. In revelation, God lowers the divine self to a place and time where human beings can know God according to the measure of human cognition. God lowers the divine self and God lets human beings know this divine self in truth as the One God is, yet, not at all, as God knows the divine self, but rather in a temporal way. Temporality means in repetition, in a cognition that progresses from present to another, which constantly begins afresh in every present, in a series of single

acts of knowledge. The fact that God stands before humanity and humanity knows God does not happen at a moment in time. It happens in the whole circumference of this center, in the whole circumference of sacramental reality, in a succession of attestations and cognitions, which all expect and indicate each other. The whole truth is always truth for us temporally. Truth always needs repetition. It has to become truth afresh in a new attestation and cognition. Again, it does so in such a way that our standing before God in truth is a walking before us in ever-new forms of the one revelation of God with us. Again, it does so in such a way that while God's revelation is always ready for us, we on our side are never ready. For God has not finished with us, but given us time. In our creaturely time, although it is our time, and therefore the time of our sin, God has given us divine time. God allows us our time in order that in it God may always have God's time for us, revelation time.

26: The Knowability of God

The possibility of the knowledge of God springs from God, in that God is the truth and God gives the divine self to humanity in the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, so that humanity may know the truth. It springs from humanity, in that, in the Son of God by the Holy Spirit, humanity becomes an object of the divine good-pleasure and therefore participates in the truth of God.

1. The Readiness of God

We can have no right understanding and no right explanation of the revealed Word of God without understanding and explanation of the knowledge of God whose Word is attested in the Bible and proclaimed in the church. We must begin with the fact that there is a readiness of God to have humanity know God. If humanity does not have a readiness for God, the question of the knowability of God will never become a problem for us. The grace of God makes it possible for humanity to know God. This grace means in the revelation of God, in the power and effectiveness of which there is knowledge of God, we have to do with a divine encroachment. However, the very attempt to fulfill the

revelation of God for ourselves can blind our eyes in a most destructive manner to the fact that it actually has been and is fulfilled by God, and therefore from within, as the first step on the way of God. The first encroachment that we allow ourselves by trying to obtain the presence of God titanically will thus involve the second. Disillusioned by the failure of this undertaking, we resist and withdraw from the presence of God as it becomes real on God's initiative and by the work of God's self-revelation in God's own divine encroachment. Grace is the majesty, freedom, undeserved quality, unexpected quality, the newness, the arbitrary character, in which the relationship to God and therefore the possibility of knowing God becomes open to humanity by God. Grace is the orientation in which God sets up an order that did not previously exist, to the power and benefit of which humanity has no claim. In its singularity, humanity can only recognize and acknowledge this grace as it is actually set up, as it is powerful and effective as a benefit that comes to humanity. Grace is God's good-pleasure. Precisely in God's good-pleasure, we find the reality of our being with God and of the being of God with us consists. Jesus Christ is God's revelation, and the reality of this relationship in Jesus Christ is the work of the divine good-pleasure.

No analogy in human experience can make God as Lord, Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer accessible to us. My opponent here is Roman Catholic theology, where God is knowable even without revelation.

If analogy could provide knowledge of God, then in principle humanity is able to know all being, even God as the incomparably real being. Therefore, if God is, and if we cannot deny the being of God, creation, or our being, necessarily we must affirm the knowability of God apart from revelation. For, it consists precisely in the analogy of being that comprehends both God and us.

One would think there was nothing simpler and more obvious than this. Why is it, then, that our statement on the knowability of God is not so simple and self-evident that we cannot settle for the last time the question of a basis of our knowledge of God in ourselves and in our relationship to the world, but seems as though it must continually arise again in different forms and phases?

First, nowhere do our images of God have the force of yielding knowledge of God. Even taken together they are not so impressive, as to compel us to admit, that humanity's ability stands in a relationship to the real God, and one can therefore claim as a natural knowledge of God. In none of its forms are the achievements of natural theology so imposing that they compel us to state that God is naturally knowable.

Second, is the practical desirability or necessity of this hypothesis so evident and urgent that we must try to find a readiness of God other than that which is present in the grace of Word and Spirit?

Humanity does not seek after God. Humanity is full of sin and evil, shaped in iniquity. Everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Therefore, the only proper terms for humanity is that it is under the sign of death, darkness, and incapacity. Yet, what unites humanity with God is grace from the side of God and faith from the side of humanity.

The biblical witness points us to God in revelation and therefore to the true God. However, to understand to what it points, and what this pointing means, we must be clear from where it points and to what end. First, from where does it point? The Bible points from none other than the standpoint of revelation. Second, to what end does the Bible point? The Bible points to the end of humanity in the world. The revelation of God confronts another person disclosed by revelation. However, this otherness of humanity is

the truth of humanity. Revelation is the truth, the truth of God and the truth of human beings in the world. Hence, our answer to this question is that the biblical witnesses point also to humanity in the world in order to interpret the revelation of God in its necessary and compulsive direction and relation to the one to whom God addresses it. This suggests that revelation will characterize human existence and all that it involves, including the whole place in which humanity exists, as one that one cannot legitimately withdraw from the claim of revelation. After all, the most real and original right under which humanity stands is the right that God has over humanity who claims human existence in revelation from God and lives in the service of God is the truth and unveiled reality of human existence. By pointing to humanity in the world, the biblical witness points through humanity to the human being of the revelation of God. They do not consider taking humanity in the world seriously and addressing humanity in its self-understanding. Rather, the biblical witness says to humanity that humanity no longer really exists as such. Human self-understanding is a monstrous misunderstanding. For the original and proper truth of humanity becomes open through the revelation from God. The biblical witness points through humanity to the One with whom God is well pleased, to the man Jesus of Nazareth, to the judgment fulfilled in Him, to the grace that humanity has found before God in Christ. They point to Christ as the origin and future of human beings in the world. The self-understanding humanity develops is not of interest to the biblical witness. The biblical witness points to a lost truth that comes to humanity in revelation. Consequently, we make synthetic statements rather than analytical statements concerning humanity. Such prophetic and apostolic pointing is toward the future truth of humanity from the standpoint of the revelation of God. From that standpoint, we can properly understand Psalm 8 and Psalm 104, two nature psalms. Now, we can put and answer our

last question independently: To what is the reference properly made when the Bible refers to humanity in the world? Their pointing to humanity in the world is an eschatological pointing; but as such, it intends us to take it seriously. We can even see a creation history in the Bible. Genesis 1 & 2 already contains theological reflection upon human life in the world. We find in Romans 1:18-32 an accusation against humanity that goes well beyond the self-understanding humanity possesses. The proclamation of kerygma is the proclamation of revelation and of something new. The proclamation is the truth of revelation proclaimed by the apostle of Jesus Christ. Proclamation is not timeless, general, and abstract truth. It does not have the character of anthropology, philosophy of religion, or apologetic. One cannot understand the biblical witness concerning human life in the world apart from proclamation. Of course, Paul does make contact with the human being in the world, but not from the standpoint of something already present on the human side of the equation, but rather, newly understood in the proclamation. We can see this in Acts in 17. The apparent failure of his preaching in Athens is the normal crisis to which human beings come when the Word confronts them. The Bible neither imposes the necessity nor even offers the possibility of reckoning with a knowability of the God of the prophets and apostles that the revelation from God does not give. To that extent, the Bible offers a Christian natural theology.

Fourth, we started out from the proposition that apparently nothing is more simple and self-evident than the knowledge that we find the knowability of God only in the readiness of God to have others know God. We can accept knowledge of God gratefully only out of the free grace and mercy of revelation from God as the inaccessible made accessible to us. Therefore, a theology that seeks another knowability of God is incontestably impossible in the sphere of the church. Incontestably, because from the

very outset a theology of this kind looks in another direction than where God becomes known in Christ, and therefore involves a violation of the Christian concept of God. Why, then, is all this not so simple and self-evident? This question raises the matter of the readiness of humanity for knowledge of God, a point that will require an independent investigation.

2. The Readiness of Humanity

In the first part of this section, we have understood the ability to know God consists first in the readiness of God to have humanity know God, something that arises from the grace of revelation. However, in this readiness of God, we have already embraced the readiness of humanity. Humanity is already ready to know God. We are not guilty of presumption if we assume this.

The person committed to natural theology holds one's own against grace, but knowing that the best way to do it is not to contradict the proclamation of grace, but to put oneself into an orderly relation with grace. Such a person does not want to deny grace, but to affirm it. I see little evidence of people building upon what they have learned, and then recognizing the grace of God. For example, Israel, who had experienced the grace of the covenant, rejected Jesus. The Pharisees, the best of the lot, could not see the grace of God in Jesus. Therefore, positing of revelation as a divine act of grace is all human beings have. The Spirit must open our eyes in order for us to have the intuition or insight as to the fact that this alien grace or intervention is truly of God. Although I can grant that faith as a way of looking at the world is an insight or intuition, I want more emphasis upon developing good reasons for them. The ability to present a reasonable position in light of the culture in which one lives is too important to set aside.

We cannot reinterpret humanity as an enemy of grace into a friend of grace. So far, we have considered only the Christological perspective and the light it sheds on human life in the world. No anthropological or ecclesiological assertion is true in itself and as such. Its truth subsists in the assertions of Christology. We can certainly say to humanity that humanity can believe. However, if we want to understand and say truly what this means, we must understand and say it of the One in whom humanity believes. We can say to humanity that individuals become something other than their self-understanding suggested through the judgment and grace of God. In Christian doctrine, we have always to take seriously the basic Pauline perception of Colossians 3:3, that our life is our life hid with Christ in God. With Christ means never at all apart from Him, never at all independently of Him, and never at all for itself. Humanity never exists for itself. The Christian person is the last to try to cling to understanding his or her own existence apart from Christ. Humanity exists in Jesus Christ alone. Humanity also finds God in Jesus Christ alone. The being and nature of humanity in and for themselves as independent bearers of an independent predicate, have, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, become an abstraction that can be destined only to disappear. Therefore, if we want to press forward to a positive answer to our question, the Christological aspect of the problem must now be permitted at once ruthlessly and totally to replace every other. We can anticipate the positive answer to our question by stating simply that the readiness of humanity included in the readiness of God is Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the knowability of God on our side, as He is the grace of God itself, and therefore also the knowability of God on the side of God. The Son of God has taken to Himself the accusation that God directed against us, the judgment that God passed upon us. He has borne the punishment that was rightly ours. As the Son of God, He could enter into our

place, into the place of every individual person, of the whole human race. As the Son of God, He has actually done it. It is easy to reply at once with the fact that, at this point, we have come to the possibility, necessity, and reality of faith. In doing so, we shall again say something that is no doubt correct. How can the victory of grace, won in Jesus Christ over human enmity against grace, be relevant, valid and saving for us except as we believe in Jesus Christ? Basically, then, the right answer can only be that as the one and only man ready for God, Jesus Christ has not only lived, died, and risen for us once in time, so that the abounding grace of God might be an event and at the same time revelation among us. He also, at the same time, is the One who stands before His Father now in eternity for us, and lives for us in God as the Son of God.

Faith is not a standing, but a being suspended and hanging without ground under our feet. Conversely, in faith, we abandon whatever we might otherwise regard as our standing, namely, our standing upon ourselves, because in faith we see it is a false and unreal standing, a hanging without support, a wavering, and falling. We abandon it for the real standing in which we no longer stand on ourselves, and in which we obviously do not stand on our faith as such, but on the ground of the truth of God and therefore on the ground of the reconciliation that has taken place in Jesus Christ and is confirmed by Christ to all eternity.

The affirmation of a natural and original knowledge of God and union with humanity with God, that does not need grace and its revelation, is simply the necessary self-exposition and self-justification of humanity as such. We can understand natural theology only as the attempt, in opposition to the rule just formulated, to confer again on humanity as such an independent word and right in the sphere of faith and the church,

and therefore not only to fail to assert the unique sovereignty of Jesus Christ in this sphere, but even to contest it.

Proclamation and theology cannot take both Jesus Christ and humanity seriously, but only Jesus Christ and humanity in God. They cannot testify to the work of the Holy Spirit and then to the work of humanity that has its root and summit in natural theology, but only to the work of the Holy Spirit. They cannot serve two masters, but only the one real Master.

27: The Limits of the Knowledge of God

Only God can know God. We do not know God in virtue of the views and concepts with which in faith we attempt to respond to the revelation of God. However, we also do not know God without making use of the permission God gives and obeying the command of God to undertake this attempt. The success of this undertaking, and therefore the veracity of our human knowledge of God, consists in the fact that the grace of God adopts and determines our viewing and conceiving to participation in the truth of God.

1. The Hiddenness of God

Nothing is more misleading than the opinion that the theological statement of the hiddenness of God says roughly the same thing as the Platonic or Kantian statement, according to which we are to understand the Supreme Being as a rational idea withdrawn from all perception and understanding. We find in the Christian tradition a statement of the incomprehensibility of God. We find this in the *First Epistle of Clement* 33:3, Athenagoras, Justin Martyr, Anselm, the Fourth Lateran Council (1224), Aquinas, and the Reformed Confessions.

Let us first try to come to a closer understanding of the content of the statement of the hiddenness of God. The assertion of the hiddenness of God tells us that God does not belong to the objects that we can always subjugate to the process of our viewing, conceiving, and expressing, and therefore subjugate to our spiritual oversight and control. In contrast to that of all other objects, the nature of God is not one that lies in the sphere

of our power. Human beings cannot fully apprehend God. We must not base the hiddenness of God on the fact that we cannot apprehend the Infinite and Absolute. What we shall have to say is that God is not a being whom we can spiritually appropriate. Put another way, we are masters of what we can apprehend. Put another way, we are originally and properly one with what we can apprehend. Of ourselves, we do not resemble God. We are not masters of God. We are not one with God. We are not capable of conceiving God. However, this means, with a backward reference so to speak, in respect of the views to which we must relate our concepts, that no human being has ever seen God. However, God is invisible and inexpressible because God is not present as the physical and spiritual world created by God is present. God is present in this world created by God in the revelation in Jesus Christ, in the proclamation of the Christ, in the witnesses and sacraments of Christ. Christ is visible only to faith. The emphasis in the confession of the hiddenness of God is not primarily that of humility but first and decisively that of gratitude. Because God forgives us our sins, we know that we need forgiveness, and that we are sinners. Because God views and conceives the divine self in the Word, we know that God is not viewable and conceivable in any other way, and that therefore we are incapable of viewing and conceiving God of ourselves. The assertion of the hiddenness of God denotes our impotence. Early church writers were already clear that there are no words, not even the most simple of basic Christian words, in the use of which we do not have to take into account this inner limitation of all human language. It is most important to establish all this expressly. After all, it follows inevitably that the inner limitation that divides and separates our viewing, thinking, and if we overlook, forget, and deny speaking as such from the being of God, and if this happens in responsibility towards the revelation of God, we lose the external limitation. Further, we

also lose the character of the revelation of God as the source and norm of our knowledge and speech about God, and the unconditioned subordination of the latter to this source and norm. It therefore lies in the nature of this revelation that we can meet it only with the praise of thanksgiving. To thank means to accept with the confession that we have not won or deserved what we have received, that we have not foreseen this accepting, and that we have had no claim to it. To thank means to acknowledge that it is a question of accepting a pure gift, whose reality has no basis elsewhere than in the goodness of the Giver, in view of which we can only glorify this kindness of the Giver. By thanking God for the revelation of God, we shall glorify God in the hiddenness of God. In the revelation of God in Christ, the hidden God has indeed made God apprehensible, even if indirectly, to faith, and through a sign. The pertinence of theology consists in making the exposition of revelation its exclusive task. How can it fail to be humble in the execution of this program, when it has no control over revelation, but revelation has constantly to find it? If we presuppose this happening, theology is as little vanity as the “old wife’s” stammering. If she may stammer, surely theology may also try to speak.

2. The Veracity of Humanity’s Knowledge of God

Knowledge of God is the presupposition and goal of all Christian doctrine. If the church lives, if its faith and its confession are real, it comes from the knowledge of God and comes to the knowledge of God. If it is also a human undertaking and action, if it also arrives at its goal, this is in consequence of the fact that God does not wish to have self-knowledge without also giving humanity the grace shown in revelation. We must first establish the fact that subsequently, secondarily, and improperly, humanity is included in this event in the height, being, and essence of God, so that God is now the object of self-cognition and the object of cognition by humanity. We can say such things

based on a philosophical definition of the absolute. In self revelation of God as Father, Son, and Spirit, we can see the fact that God is the object of our cognition. We can find God as the One who in the depths of the being of God is none other than the One who loves us, and therefore bestows the divine self upon us, positing God as the object of our cognition. However, because we find God as this One, it does not mean that we can see why and how God is this One. With this as a starting-point, we must now consider the success of the human undertaking to view and conceive God, and therefore the truth or veracity of our human knowledge of God. The success of this undertaking, if it attains success, obviously consists in the veracity of the human knowledge of God, namely, in the fact that, knowing God, we do not have to do with something else or someone else, but validly, compulsorily, unassailably and trustworthily with God. Our undertaking to view and conceive God will not, then, involve self-deception, and our attempt to speak of God will not involve the deception of others. The undertaking and the attempt are on the way to success as true as it can be as our knowledge, which cannot coincide with the self-knowledge of God. The veracity of our knowledge of God is the veracity of the revelation of God. This statement we now have to expound. The truth of the revelation of God consists first and decisively in the fact that it is God's revelation. The revelation of God is authentic information about God because it is first-hand information, because in it God is witness and teacher of God. The fact that the revelation of God has to do with us makes our knowledge of God true. We must go further. The veracity of the revelation of God verifies itself by laying claim to the thinking and speaking of humanity. Our thinking, which we execute in views and concepts, is our responsibility to ourselves. Our speech is our responsibility to others. In this twofold responsibility, it claims us. We cannot be responsible to ourselves and others without at the same time being responsible to the

revelation of God, as those whom this revelation concerns. We must go still further. We have seen that to the will of God to reveal the divine self corresponds the power of God to do so. As there is no contradiction against the will of God, so also there is no real hindrance against the power of God. We are saying that the claim made upon us by the revelation of God does not demand anything impossible, and therefore that it is not an impotent and ineffectual claim. Again, for the sake of the veracity of our knowledge of God, the veracity of the revelation of God will necessarily make us humble. By the grace of God, we shall truly know God with our views and concepts, and truly speak of God with our words. However, we shall not be able to boast about it, as if it is our own success, and we have performed and done it. We have known and spoken, but God will have credit for the veracity of our thinking and speaking. There remains for us the task of defining more precisely the character and bearing of this participation of our knowledge in the veracity of its goal. We have good grounds to ask about the veracity that is proper to it be reason of its goal, in virtue of its participation in the truth of the revelation of God, in virtue of the divine unveiling as the goal of the way of God and our way. What sort of participation is it?

First, we can understand it only as participation in the revelation of God. First, it does not have its necessity in itself. It does not happen on its own account. An object evokes it. Our knowledge of God as participation in the veracity of the revelation of God consists in an offering of our thanks. This means further that it can consist only in an acknowledgment of the revelation of God. It takes place in the sphere of our humanity and claims our very best, and therefore our best thinking and speaking to this end. However, this does not mean that it is abandoned to our arbitrary selection of this best according to our own choice and pleasure. True gratitude enquires, and it does not

enquire in a soliloquy, but it enquires after God, to whom it wants to show gratitude. However, this means that it cannot take place except in joyfulness. There can be no acknowledgment of the revelation of God unless we ourselves are involved. However, we are placed strictly under the rule of the object and become obedient. If the revelation reaches us, if it becomes for us the necessary basis of our knowledge, this does mean that it approaches us from without. It also means that it does actually come to us and therefore into us. It does not cease to transcend us, but we become immanent to it, so that obedience to it is our free will. However, because God remains transcendent to us even in the revelation of God, the subjectivity of our acknowledgment of the revelation of God means our elevation above ourselves. This makes our knowledge of God a joyful action.

Second, now if the participation of our knowledge of God in the veracity of the revelation of God consists in the offering of our thanks, we shall have to go rather further back and say that it will always be also an act of wondering awe. Awe refers to the distance between our work and its object. This distance is certainly overcome. However, it is still a distance that is overcome only by the grace of God, the distance between here and there, below and above. In awe, we gratefully let grace be grace, and always receive it as such.

Third, this relationship is to be regarded as a positive relationship, that is, one in which there exists a real fellowship between the knower and his or her knowing on the one hand the known on the other. However, if this fellowship is not to be denied, in what does it consist? We approach the topic of analogy. If in this fellowship, there can be no question of either parity or disparity, there remains only what is generally meant by analogy: similarity, partial correspondence and agreement. However, how does this partial correspondence and agreement arise? Both in God and in our work, God is

Another. In revelation, God controls the property that belongs to God, elevating our words to their proper use, giving God to be their proper object, and therefore giving them truth. This analogy of truth comes into being in virtue of the decision of the grace of God, which is to this extent the grace of revelation.

We must take a final step. We must now be clear that this positivity is definitely restricted. This goal of our knowledge of God also means its limit to forward progress. If our knowledge of God is true, our words stand in a correspondence and agreement with the being of God. It can only be a question of similarity, of analogy, and therefore of partial correspondence and agreement between our words and the being of God.

However, we still have to explain the partial that denotes that the goal is also the limit of our knowledge of God. Therefore, in this connection, the partial that we have to use in explanation of the concept of analogy means that it is a question of these two parts that, in themselves and in their relation to each other, are quite incalculable. God is always God and humanity is always humanity in this relationship. Unveiling and veiling thus designate the way that God goes with us, not a contradiction that God pronounces against us, into which God impels us, and which we have to suffer and bear as such. From first to last on this way it is a question of the one saving fulfillment of fellowship between God and us. In the fulfillment of this fellowship God has to be hidden from us to be revealed to us, to become revealed and yet to remain hidden, so that becoming revealed, the Yes that God says to us, is the goal and end of the way of God, no matter how hidden it may be under the No. Our concern is with the success of the undertaking to answer the revelation of God in faith based on human views and concepts, and therefore with the veracity of human knowledge of god. We have tried to explain this along three lines. First, we have tried to define the veracity under consideration as the veracity of God

revelation that claims us and sustains us in it. Second, we have explained that this participation of ours in the veracity of God is the relationship of thanks, in which our knowing receives the character of a permission of our viewing, conceiving, and speaking. Third, we have discussed this similarity in relation to its origin, emergence, and actuality, all of which have confronted us with the reality of revelation. These three lines of thought in their mutual relationship still need to be finally consolidated and secured.

Chapter VI: The Reality of God

28: The Being of God as the One who Loves in Freedom

God is who God is in the act of revelation. God seeks and creates fellowship between God and us, and therefore God loves us. However, God is this loving God without us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the freedom of the Lord, who has the life of God within the being of God.

1. The Being of God in Act

God is. Dogmatics can say little more than this. Dogmatics need to be quite careful when, like Melancthon in his *Loci* of 1521, tries to base the doctrine of God upon the general idea of God rather than revelation. Questions concerning the being of God involve the action and work of God as revealed in the Word of God. The subject of this section is God, and not the general philosophical notion of Being. We cannot discern the being of God in any other way than by looking where God gives us the self of God to see, and therefore by looking at the works of God, at this relation and attitude, in the confidence that in these works, we do not have to do with any others. We focus on the works of God and therefore with God and his being as God. What does it mean to say God? What or who is God? If we want to answer this question legitimately and thoughtfully, then we cannot turn our thoughts anywhere else than to the act of God in revelation. What God is as God is something that we shall encounter at the place where

God deals with us as Lord and Savior. The act of revelation as such carries with it the fact that God has not withheld the self of God from humanity as true being. God has given no less than the self of God to humanity as the overcoming of their need, as light in their darkness. In the revelation of God, which is the content of the Word, we have to do with the act of God. Generally, this means an event or happening. However, as such, this event is in no sense one that one can transcend. The event is not an event that has merely happened and is now a past fact of history. The revelation of God is this as well. However, it is also an event happening in the present, here and now. However, the event that took place is an accomplished fact. The event is also future in that the event that lies completely and wholly in front of us, that has not yet happened, but which simply comes upon us. The historical completeness of this event, the full contemporary character of the event, also makes it truly future. The event or act of God is final, one that one cannot surpass or compromise.

The being of God is life. The emphatic description of God in both testaments is of God as the living God. The act of God is pure and simple. What is the specific freedom of the event, act, and life of God in the revelation of God? Acts happen only in the unity of spirit and nature. If one is to deny such a unity concerning God, then there is no true, real history of the acts of God in any genuine sense. God would have no decision or work. God would not bring revelation or reconciliation. We could not speak of creation or redemption as happening or decision. We could have no eternal witness of the Son through the Father, no eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and no inner life of God. Now that we are clear about this, we are free to state the opposite truth that the specific freedom of the event, act and life of God in the revelation of God and in eternity is the freedom of the Spirit. The being of God is being that knows,

wills, and decides of itself and moves itself. If God is only a higher degree of the movement that we know well enough as our own, the difficulty becomes to what extent beyond this that we can understand God as self-motivated, and therefore to what extent there necessarily has to be a particular idea of God. The danger is that when we speak of God, do we simply speak of ourselves, only shouting or with an exclamation mark?

The revelation of God draws its authority and evidence from itself, rather than any human foundations. The commandment, grace, and promise of God have a unique force because they have no reference to human strength or weakness. The work of God is triumphant because it is not bound to our work, but precedes and follows it. The righteous demands of God on humanity, and the faithfulness of God in covenant with humanity, are irresistible and irrevocable because of their confirmation they need only God, and no corresponding relation of humanity.

Human beings can discern the ways of God in the world only as God addresses humanity in specific, finite, and temporal ways. In this sense, we need to bring the event or act of revelation into relation with human hopes, dreams, and desires. The act or event of revelation will point the way to the fulfillment of these hopes, dreams, and desires.

Every statement of what God, and explanation how God is, must always state and explain what and how God is in the act and decision of God.

2. The being of God as the one who loves

The essence of God that human beings see in the revelation of the name is the being and act of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. We must ask what this name has to say to us about the particular being of God in the act of God.

God is the one who seeks and creates fellowship between God and us. God does not have to do it. God already has what God seeks. Creation is already a seeking and creating of fellowship. Revelation heightens this seeking and creating of fellowship. This seeking and creating finds its crown and final confirmation in the future destiny of humanity as redeemed in Jesus Christ, in his destiny for eternal salvation and life. What God does in all this, God is: and God is no other than the one who does all this. God wills to be ours. God wills that we should belong to God. God wills to belong to us and God wills that we should belong to God. God wills to be who God is in this relationship of fellowship. The life of God leans toward this unity with our life. God has nothing higher than this to give than a relationship with God. In the gift of a relationship with god, God has given us every blessing. We recognize and appreciate this blessing when we describe the being of God in the statement that God is the one who loves. That God is God consists in the fact that God loves. In the expression of this love, God seeks and creates fellowship with humanity. The act of God is that of the one who loves.

First, the reality of God as the one who loves concerns itself with a seeking and creation of fellowship for humanity for its own sake. The love of God has only to be the love God has to be everything for us.

Second, the reality of God as the one who loves concerns itself with a seeking and creation of fellowship without any reference to an existing aptitude or worthiness on the part of the one loved. The love of God does not have the condition of any reciprocity of love.

Third, the reality of God as the one who loves is an end in itself.

Ritschl defined the love of God as the constant will that summons another person to the achievement of his or her own supreme destiny, and in such a way that the one who

loves follows her or own final purpose. For him, the rule of God consists in the moral association of the human race through the motive of universal love. This rule is the *summum bonum* of the human race. As God wills both the universal end of the human race and the peculiar purpose of God, God is love. God loves sinners in light of their eternal destiny. Of course, the danger of this approach is that the rule of God becomes little more than human self-consciousness in its elevated moments.

Fourth, the reality of God as the one who loves is necessary, for love is the being, essence, and nature of God. We cannot tie the love of God to the existence of an object outside of God. The actuality of love of God is in the action of God and in the living God. The revelation of the name discloses the nature of God. God loves. God loves as only God can love. God's loving is itself the blessing that as the one who loves God communicates to the loved. God's loving is itself the ground of love of God toward humanity.

We have defined the being of God as a being in act, and therefore we have defined God as person. The One who loves us, who seeks and creates fellowship between God and us, also informs us what a person is. Some theological traditions, such as idealism, discuss the personality of God prior to the Trinity, thereby separating revelation from the discussion of the personality of God.

3. The being of God in freedom

We now need to reflect upon the depth in the divine being, without which our reflections upon the life of God would be incomplete. We have discussed the life of God and then the love of God. We have discussed the being of God in act and then of the being of God as the one who loves. The being of God as one who lives and loves is being in freedom. In this way, freely, God lives and loves. In this way, God is God, and

distinguishes God from everything else that lives and loves. In this way, God is distinguished from other persons. God is the one, original, and authentic person through whose creative power and will alone all other persons are and are sustained. Freedom is more than the absence of limits, restrictions, or conditions. Freedom in its positive and proper qualities means to be grounded in one's own being, to be determined and moved by oneself. This is the freedom of the divine life and love. Aseity is not the act of God in self-realization. When we have established this first proposition that God is the one who is free within the divine self, we can express the aseity of God in a second proposition, that God is the one who is free from all origination, conditioning, or determination from without, by that which is not God. Against the background of these presuppositions we will now attempt a general explanation of the divine freedom in this secondary connotation of the idea, as the absoluteness of God. The fact that God is free in relationship to all that is not God means noetically that one cannot classify God or include God in the same category with anything that God is not. However, behind this noetic absoluteness of God there stands decisively the ontic absoluteness of God. This is decisive because in the revelation of God it is really a question of the ontic absoluteness of God, from which the noetic absoluteness of God inevitably follows. Therefore, God can indeed be sufficiently beyond the creature to be his or her creator out of nothing and at the same time be free enough partially or completely to transform its being or to take it from it again as first God gave it. However, God can do even more than this. God can so indwell the other that, God is its creator and the giver of its life. God does not take away this life. God is free to maintain distance from the creature and equally free to enter into partnership with the creature. God is free to lift the creature itself, in the most vigorous sense, into unity with the divine being of God.

In this section, we have written about the aseity of God and of the primary and secondary absoluteness of God. The only reason we have to distinguish between the living and loving of God is because God is not merely the idea of love, but the one who loves in the very act of existing. We do not mean that God first lives, and then God loves. God loves, and in this act, God lives.

29. The Perfections (attributes) of God

God lives the perfect divine life in the abundance of many individual and distinct perfections. Each of these is perfect in itself and in combination with all the others. For whether an individual and distinct perfection is a form of love in which God is free, or a form of freedom in which God loves, it is nothing else but God as one, simple, and distinctive being.

The being of God consists in the fact that God is the one who lives in freedom. I want to discuss the doctrine of the attributes of God in this way. We might also write of perfections, appellations, or virtues. The old problem of the doctrine of the attributes of God is so far-reaching that, in this section, we must first devote to it a general treatment, and then develop it concretely in the two following sections.

Let us first attempt to define the problem as such. According to Scripture, all of the glory of God has concentrated, gathered up, and unified itself in God as the Lord of glory. We next turn our attention to the question of the possibility, legitimacy, and necessity of speaking here of perfections, of the glory of God as a multiplicity of perfections, and therefore of the latter in their individuality and diversity.

First, the multiplicity, individuality, and diversity of the divine perfections are those of the one divine being and therefore not those of another divine nature allied to it.

Second, the multiplicity, individuality, and diversity of the perfections of God are those of the simple being of God, which is not therefore divided and then put together again.

Third, the multiplicity, individuality and diversity of the perfections of God are rooted in the being of God and not in the participation of God in the character of other beings.

The further fundamental question to which we must now turn is this: to what extent do these many individual and various perfections of God exist? How do we come to recognize them as such, and to speak of them based on the revelation of God, and in responsibility to this revelation, without reservation in respect of their truth? The problem of the derivation and distribution of the divine attributes is part of traditional theology. Each attribute is the characteristic being of God as God reveals who God is in the act of revelation. Contrary to this, some seek a psychological framework, such as in the intellect and will of God, or in the feeling of God. Others seek a basis for the attributes of God in the religious consciousness, as suggested by Schleiermacher. Others seek an historical intuition for the attributes of God, as we might think of in Ritschl. However, we need to focus our point of departure for reflecting upon the attributes of God upon the way God is present in revelation, in which God is partly revealed and partly concealed. This unity and this distinction correspond to the unity and distinction in the being of God between the love of God and the freedom of God. God loves us. Because we can trust the revelation of God as the revelation of the being of God, God is the one who loves. As such, God is completely knowable to us. However, God loves us in the freedom of God. Because here too we can trust the revelation of God as a self-revelation, God is free. God is completely unknowable to us. That God loves us and that God does so in the freedom of God are both true in the grace of the revelation of God. The two fundamental features of the being of god necessarily indicate the two directions in which we shall have to think, now that it can no longer be a question of analyzing our knowledge of God as such,

but of presenting the One already known. In the following sections, then, we shall have to treat of the perfections of divine love and the perfections of divine freedom. Three decisive points are at stake.

First, it is in the nature of the case that when we speak of the love of God we have occasion to think chiefly of God in the fellowship of God with the other.

Second, the division of the divine perfections according to this twofold principle can involve the temptations of attempted epistemological deduction.

Third, the order in which I formulate these two series of divine attributes is a matter of importance.

30. The Perfections of the Divine Loving

The divinity of the love of God consists and confirms itself in the fact that within the divine self and in all the works of God, God is gracious, merciful, and patient, and at the same time is holy, righteous, and wise.

1. The Grace and Holiness of God

God is the one who in the Son, Jesus Christ, loves all the children of God. The being of God is the loving of God toward all that God has created. God is all that God is as the one who loves. All the perfections of God are the perfections of the love of God. The freedom of God is no less divine than the love of God. The love of God is divine only as far as God exercises it in freedom. The love of God is no less divine than the freedom of God. The freedom of God is divine only as far as this freedom is the freedom in which God loves.

We begin our consideration of divine love with a study of the concept of divine grace as it stands directly confronted with, controlled by, and purified by, the concept of divine holiness.

Grace is the distinctive mode of the being of God in so far as it seeks and creates fellowship by its own free inclination and favor, unconditioned by any merit or claim in the beloved, but also unhindered by any unworthiness or opposition in the latter. It is in this distinctive characteristic that we recognize the divinity of the love of God. The Hebrew word for this is *chesed* and the Greek word is *charis*. Grace is a gift. This must be our *a priori* definitive description. The giver, God, makes God the gift, offering the divine self for fellowship with the other, and thus showing the divine self in relation to the other to be the One who loves. Everything depends here on the immediacy of the relation and on the fact that the being and action of God. People in the Bible pray in the following way.

Psalm 109:26 (NRSV)

²⁶ Help me, O LORD my God!

Save me according to your steadfast love.

Psalm 106:4 (NRSV)

⁴ Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you deliver them;

Psalm 119:88 (NRSV)

⁸⁸ In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

Psalm 143:8 (NRSV)

⁸ Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,
for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.

In prayer, people in the Bible will also pray, “Be gracious unto me.” Grace means turning, not in equality, but in condescension. The fact that God is gracious means that God condescends, God, the only One who is really in a position to condescend. The inmost being of God in grace is that God wills not to remain in this position. The conception of grace in the Bible involves the counterpart that receives it from God is not only not worthy of it but utterly unworthy, that God is gracious to sinners, that the being of God is gracious, an inclination, goodwill and favor that remains unimpeded even by

sin, by the resistance with which the creature faces God. Grace shows its power over and against sin. Grace presupposes the existence of this opposition. It reckons with it, but does not fear it. This opposition from humanity cannot limit grace. It overcomes it, triumphing in this opposition and the overcoming of it. We find this view in Paul: Romans 5:15, 17, and 20. The Roman Catholic conception of divine grace is in opposition to what I have just said. Forgiveness cannot be an object of uncertainty. It cannot be accepted and treated lightly. It meets us, not in spite of, but in and with all the holiness, righteousness, and wisdom of God. It claims us, cleansing, judging, and redeeming us. It is also our true and final consolation. God is in it. God reveals the essence of God in this streaming forth of grace. This is how God loves. This is how God seeks and creates fellowship between God and us. By this distinctive mark, we recognize the divinity of the love of God. In this way, graciously, God acts outwardly towards those whom God made in a way consistent with who God is from eternity.

We now place this concept of the grace of God alongside that of the holiness of God. Our notion of grace is not able to grasp in its clarity and richness all that grace is in God. If we have concern about the truth of the God who is wholly grace, we cannot cling to our idea of grace as though our understanding of God had no need to grow, as though this idea of ours enabled us to acquire control over God. We are not making any crucial change of theme when we go on to speak of the holiness of God. We simply continue speaking of the grace of God. If we are to go on to speak of the one rich grace of God, we must develop further concepts. The common factor linking the biblical concepts of the grace and the holiness of God is seen in that both point to the transcendence of God over all that is not God. When we speak of grace, we think of the freedom in which God turns in good will and favor towards another. When we speak of holiness, we think of this

same freedom that God proves by the fact that in this turning towards the other God remains true to God and makes the will of God prevail. The bond between the concepts of grace and holiness consist further in the fact that both point to God's transcendence over the resistance that the being of God and action encounters from the opposite side. That God is gracious does not mean that God surrenders God to the one to whom God is gracious. God neither comprises with the resistance of humanity, nor ignores it, nor calls it good. Therefore, the one to whom God is gracious comes to experience the opposition of God to humanity. Possibly the most emphatic text on the holiness of God is in Hebrews 10:26-31. To believe in God means that we bow to the opposition of God to us, accepting, and allowing the good will of God toward us to be our ground of confidence and hope. The holiness of God consists in the unity of the judgment of God with the grace of God. God is holy because the grace of God judges and the judgment of God is gracious. The holiness of humanity and of human actions, of things and places, is constituted by their serviceableness in the fellowship founded and initiated by God between God and humanity. Unholiness is unserviceableness to this end. The holiness of God describes the form of the attitude in this fellowship. Sin is whatever disturbs and makes this fellowship impossible. For this reason, the attitude of God in this fellowship is characterized by holiness, exclusiveness, the condemnation and annihilation of sin. The holiness of God involves peril to the people with whom God has fellowship. Ritschl went against this view by saying that the wrath of God in the Old Testament has the restriction of occasional outbursts. He thereby undermined the eschatological reality of divine wrath, which in turn logically removes divine grace and love. If God does not meet us in jealous zeal and wrath, then God does not meet us at all. In that case, all our asseverations about divine love, God would in fact leave humanity to itself. In the manifestation of

wrath and judgment comes the pardon, reconciliation, calling, and commissioning of the prophet, which was obviously from the outset the secret meaning of this whole revelation of the holiness of God. To accept the grace of God means to respect the holiness of God, and therefore to accept, heed, and keep the laws of God, to fear the threats of God, to experience the wrath of God and to suffer the punishment of God. Otherwise, acceptance of grace is indistinguishable from heathen quietism. However, respect for the holiness of God, if it is not a vain heathen religion of fear, can only mean directly to accept the grace of God in thankfulness, to allow it to bring contentment and replenishment.

2. The Mercy and Righteousness of God

In the relationship between this love and its object, and therefore in the grace of God, we have to do with the turning of a need. The free inclination of God to those God has created, denoted in the biblical witness by grace, takes place under the presupposition that the creature is in distress and that God's intention is to espouse the cause of humanity and to grant humanity assistance. Because the gracious love of God consists in this inclination, it is merciful. The being of God is mercy. The mercy of God lies in the readiness of God to share in sympathy and stamps all the being and doing of God. It lies in the will of God, springing from the depths of the nature of God and characterizing it, to take the initiative for the removal of this distress. The love and grace of God are not just mathematical or mechanical relations, but have their true seat and origin in the movement of the heart of God. Rooted in the original, free, and powerful compassion of God is that which characterizes everything God is and does. From the outset, God is open, ready and inclined to the need, distress, and torment of another. The compassionate words and deeds of God are not grounded in a subsequent change, in a mere approximation to certain conditions in the creature that is distinct from God, but are rooted in the heart of

God, in the life and being of God as God. The heart of God is suffering, even when we think that we are the sufferers and that we have a right or obligation to lament. The heart of God is wounded, and wounded through our heart. How can we reverse the relationship and behave as though we have to suffer in the void, distinctly, eternally, or on our own account? In the recognition and confession of the mercy of God, we dissolve what we are accustomed to take so seriously as the tragedy of human existence. There is something far more serious and tragic, the fact that our distress is freely accepted by God, and that in God it becomes real agony. That this is the case is due to the mercy of God.

We now turn to the righteousness of God. Our point of departure must be that the righteousness of God is a determination of the love, and therefore of the grace and mercy, of God. The love, grace, and mercy of God have the determination of righteousness necessarily, as they have that of holiness. It does not follow logically that God is righteous, that what God wills, does, and realizes in this fellowship is what corresponds to the worth of God. How can God be good both to the good and to the evil? How then, can God have mercy on the wicked and yet at the same time and in this very way be righteous? This is how Anselm poses the problem in *Proslogion* 9-11. The revelation of God is wholly the Law, manifesting the will of God as righteousness, and distinguishing it from all unrighteousness. The activity of God is wholly the execution of this Law. God cannot affirm the nature of God any more strongly than as the righteous God, which God demonstrates that grace that pardons the sinner. For this grace is thoroughly the proof of the existence of the righteous God. It is so from every point of view: its foundation in the will of God, its execution in the death of Jesus Christ, and its application to believers. God does not need to yield the righteousness of God a single inch when God is merciful. Faith in the righteousness of God means necessarily a choice and decision in favor of the

righteousness of God as opposed to our righteousness. In this connection, it is important to notice that the people to whom God in the righteousness of God turns as helper and Savior is everywhere in the Old Testament the harassed and oppressed people of Israel, which, powerless in itself, has no rights, and is delivered over to the superior force of its enemies. In Israel, it is especially the poor, the widows, the orphans, the weak and the defenseless. The righteousness of God, the faithfulness in which God is true to who God is, is disclosed as help and salvation, as a saving divine intervention for humanity directed to the poor, the wretched and the helpless as such. On the other hand, with the rich, the full, and the secure as such, according to nature of God, God can have nothing to do. The righteousness of God triumphs when humanity has no means of triumphing. It is light when humanity lies in darkness and life when humanity walks in the shadow of death.

The people who live by the faith that this is true stand under a political responsibility. Such people know that the right enjoys the special protection of the God of grace. As surely as they live by the grace of God, they cannot evade this claim. They cannot avoid the question of human rights. They can only will and affirm a state based on justice. By any other political attitude, they reject the divine justification.

We are warned against the too convenient and facile way of thought that has simply divested the concept of divine righteousness of the notion that is necessarily bound up with the concept of judgment, that of a decision about good and evil. The righteousness of God is a righteousness that judges and therefore both exculpates and condemns, both rewards and punishes. How far is the mercy of God at the same time the righteousness of the judgment of God? How far is the righteousness of God recognizable in the fact that as belonging to God, the divine righteousness is also saving and victorious

mercy? The revelation of God in Jesus Christ supplies to this question the answer that the condemning and punishing righteousness of God is in itself and as such the depth, power and might of the mercy of God. If we are earnestly to cleave to God, if we are to accept the salvation accomplished in God and offered to us through God, we are really to look forward in faith rather than backward, we cannot try to overlook or evade by reservations the essential realization that God also is angry, condemns and punishes. If we truly love God, we must love God also in the anger of God, condemnation and punishments, or rather, we must see, feel, and appreciate the love of God to us even the anger, condemnation and punishment of God. We cannot avoid the conclusion that it is where the divine love, grace, and mercy the meaning and intention of Scripture as a whole attest with supreme clarity. The unique event of Jesus Christ embodies that love, grace, and mercy. According to the unmistakable witness of the New Testament itself, they encounter us as a divine act of wrath, judgment, and punishment. We find this emphasis on God taking on the wrath of God in the cross in several New Testament texts: John 3:16, Titus 2:14, Galatians 4:4, and Romans 8:3. This sending means a self-offering grounded in the free will of the Father and the Son in fulfillment of the divine love turned toward the cosmos and the world of humanity. However, it is the case that God in the suffering or sending of the Son, and the Son himself in accepting this mission and allowing himself to be sacrificed, has exposed himself to an imposition. In this love, God has been hard upon God, exacting a supreme and final demand. God did not spare the Son. Christ was rich, and for our sake, He became poor, as in II Corinthians 8:9. The Son did not snatch at being equal with god, but humbled Himself, as in Philippians 2:6-7. In what consists this sternness of God against God, this self-abasement of God in the Son? According to Philippians 2:7 it consisted in the fact that in a self-emptying, in a complete

resignation not of the essence but of the form of the Godhead. God took up our human form, the form of a servant, in complete likeness to other people. Humanity found God in the fashion of a man. Like all people, He was born of a woman. However, what does it mean to take the place of humanity, to be a person, to be born of a woman? It means for the Son, that He came under the Law, that is, that He stepped into the heart of the inevitable conflict between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of humanity. God took this conflict into the being of God. God bore it in God to the bitter end. God took part in it from both sides. God endured it from both sides. God was not only the God who is offended by humanity. God was also the person whom God threatens with death, who falls a victim to death in face of the judgment of God. If God really entered into solidarity with us, it meant necessarily that God took within God, in likeness to us, the flesh of sin. God shared in the status, constitution and situation of humanity in which humanity resists God and cannot stand before God but must die.

First, the fact that the Son of God took our place on Golgotha and thereby freed us from the divine anger and judgment, reveals first the full implication of the wrath of God, of the condemning and punishing justice of God. It shows us what a consuming fire burns against sin. It thus discloses too the full implication of sin, what it means to resist God, to be the enemy of God, which is the guilty determination of our human existence.

Second, because it was the Son of God who took our place on Good Friday, what had necessarily to happen could happen there. There could happen there, that which could not have happened to us without causing our annihilation. That is to say, the righteousness of god in condemnation and punishment could take its course in relation to human sin.

Third, because it was the Son of God, because it was God who on Good Friday suffered for us, the destruction that took place there of the suffering and death that resulted from human disobedience to God could justly satisfy and indeed fulfill the righteousness of God.

Fourth, because it was the Son of God, that God who took our place on Good Friday, the substitution could be effectual and procure our reconciliation with the righteous god, and therefore the victory of the righteousness of god, and therefore our own righteousness in the sight of god. Only God, our Lord and Creator, could stand surety for us, could take our place, could suffer eternal death in our stead a the consequence of our sin in such a way that it was finally suffered and overcome and therefore did not need to be suffered any more by us. No creature, no other human being could do that. However, the Son could do it. Jesus Christ could take our place with this effectiveness because as the Son of God, God became a person and had therefore the freedom and power to be in humanity as that individual who became the Head and Representative of us all. Therefore, Jesus Christ could not only speak to us in the name of God, but also, in our name, to speak to God.

3. The Patience and Wisdom of God

After speaking of the grace and mercy of God, we reasonably consider next the perfection of the divine patience as a special perfection of the love and therefore of the being of God. We might refer to several passages in the Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:6, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 86:15, 103:8, and 145:8. Love in general does not necessarily bear the character of grace or of mercy. We must now continue that it does not necessarily bear the character of patience. Patience exists where God gives space and time with a definite intention, where God allows freedom in expectation of a

response. God acts in this way. God makes this purposeful concession of space and time. God allows this freedom of expectancy. The abyss in the heart of God is so deep that in it the reality distinct from God can be contained in all its wretchedness. It does not have to perish. God allows independent beings to live as the object of divine mercy, to live under the divine righteousness, to live under the full and strict outworking of what the encounter with God and by the intervention of God for these independent beings entails. We shall see at once that this patience is the divine being in power and not in weakness if we consider in detail the testimony of scripture to the revelation of God from this particular standpoint. One example is the story of Cain in Genesis 4:1-17, in which God does not will the death that Cain deserves. Another example is the flood story of Genesis 6-9, in which I Peter 3:20 rightly points out that the fact that God saves one family shows the patience of God. An impatient God would be petty, human, weak, and finally a false god. What is the real intention of God when God exercises patience? We might even ask where the patience of God is. The New Testament has a decisive testimony to this reality.

Hebrews 1:3 (NRSV)

³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

The patience of God does not leave humanity to fend for itself. The jealous zeal of God in and for those whom God has made is something that the Incarnation of the Word powerfully shows. It is also clear that God does not experience disappointment or self-deception with respect to the sincerity, or insincerity, of the human penitence for which God waits with patience. Even the judgments and punishments of God, the whole severity of the conduct of God toward Israel, do not contradict the truth that God actually wills to maintain and not destroy those God has made. They are all temporary and as such symbolic judgments and punishments. They are not the outbreak of the genuine wrath

and judgment of God. They are not the eternal death, the abandonment and precipitation into nothingness, which Israel and with Israel, all humanity has deserved. They are all to be included in the sway of the patience of God. That which we all deserved God has suffered in our place and in Israel's place by the only righteous One, who achieved a perfect penitence – although God had no need of this attribute – by not refusing to take within God the genuine wrath and judgment of God.

That God within the being of God and in the works of God is gracious and therefore holy, merciful, and righteous, patient and wise, is the proof and essence of the divinity of the love of God according to the main theme of the section and the explanations already adduced.

These perfections of God and the fact that God turns to those whom God has made and takes their misery to heart, could still stand perhaps in the shadow of a slight of suspicion. They are true, no doubt, but it might easily be otherwise. Why is it that God is gracious and merciful? We cannot try as it were, to justify God from above, measuring God by this or that standard of value and reasonableness. Nor is it as if there is no answer to this Why? In God, or as if we cannot understand this answer or know God as the One in whom there is an answer to this question. The answer is that God is wise. The wisdom of God characterizes the whole activity as reliable and liberating, as something in which we can have confidence, just because the wisdom of God consists in and finally evinces itself as the firmness and self-consistence of God. The special contribution imparted by the concept of wisdom to the clarifying of grace and holiness, mercy and righteousness, is that God is not the slave of the patience of God when in the dealings of which these other ideas speak God gives us time, and therefore allows space and ground as the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the world.

31. The Perfections of the Divine Freedom

The divinity of the freedom of God consists and confirms itself in the fact that within God and in all the works of God is One, constant, and eternal, and therewith also omnipresent, omnipotent, and glorious.

My presentation of the divine freedom has the character of an attempt or suggestion, since we cannot appeal directly to biblical texts in this matter.

1. The Unity and Omnipresence of God

We begin with the unity of God. All the perfections of the freedom of God can be summed up by saying that God is One. To this extent, all the perfections of the love of God, real and operative in the freedom of God, and all the perfections of the divine being taken together, can be summed up in this one conception.

First, we take unity in the sense of uniqueness. What do we mean when we say that it belongs to God to be unique? God alone is God. God is the only one of the kind God is. There is not another God, either a second god or many gods. In comparison with everything else, God is unique. Whatever its nature and mode of existence, it is not God. It cannot stand beside God as a second of the kind God is or a multiple of the kind God is.

The other side or meaning of the unity of God is that God is simple. This signifies that in all that God is and does, God is wholly and undividedly God. At no time or place is God composed out of what is distinct from God. Being simple in the sense described, God is incomparably free, sovereign and majestic. In this quality of simplicity are rooted, fixed and included all the other attributes of the majesty of God: the constancy and eternity of God, the omnipresence, omnipotence and glory of God. Nothing can affect God, or be far from God, or contradict or withstand God, because in God there is no separation, distance, contradiction or opposition. God is Lord in every relationship, because God is the Lord God, unconditionally One as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in the whole real wealth of the being of God. For every distinction of the being of God and

working is simply a repetition and corroboration of the one being and, in the one being, of all that God was from eternity and therefore from all time, and of all that God will be in eternity and therefore for all time. When we say that God is one, unique, and simple, we mean something different from when we ascribe unity to any other quantity. Anything else to which we can ascribe unity is one side by side with one or many others which are comparable with it and belong with it to a species it is one instance in a genus. It is, therefore, only relatively unique. However, God is an instance outside every genus. God is unique, in a way that is itself unique and one cannot denote by any concept. Everything else is only relatively simple. However, God is simple without the least possibility of either internal or external composition. The unity of God is the freedom of God, the aseity of God, the deity of God. "Monotheism" is obviously the esoteric mystery behind nearly all the religions with which we are familiar, as well as most of the primitive religion. "Monotheism" is an idea that one can directly divine or logically and mathematically construct without God. The artifice adopted by Islam consists in its developing to a supreme degree what is at the heart of all paganism, revealing and setting at the very center its esoteric essence, that is, so-called "monotheism." In the love of God above all, God reveals the being of God as the One who is incomparable and therefore unique; which means that God reveals the being of God as the true and essential God. We might note two important biblical texts in this regard, Deuteronomy 4:32-40 and 6:4. None of this has anything to do with the ambiguous charm of the number "one" or the subjective and objective monism of human self-consciousness and world consciousness. The freedom of /god and therefore the simplicity of God are the freedom and simplicity of the love of God. In Scripture, the utterly simple is God in the actuality, the superior

might, the constancy, the obviousness, or even more simply, the factuality, in which God is present as God and deals as God with the humanity God has created.

Since God is one, unique, and simple, God is for this reason omnipresent. Omnipresence is a determination of the freedom of God. It is the sovereignty in which, as the One God is, existing and acting in the way that corresponds to the essence of God, God is present to everything else, to everything that is not God but is distinct from God. The presupposition of all divine sovereignty is that of the divine omnipresence. The whole divine sovereignty is based on the fact that for God nothing exists that is only remote. All of this considers divine spatiality. The perfection in which God omnipresent, and therefore not nowhere but somewhere, does mean indeed that God is everywhere undividedly and completely as the One God is and in all the fullness of the being of God. It does not mean that God is in the least hindered from being present everywhere in a particular way. Otherwise, it could not be the perfection of the freedom and love of God. God is present to other things, and is able to create and give them space, because God possesses space apart from everything else. The space everything else possesses is the space that God gives it out of the fullness of God. The fact is that first, God has space for God and that subsequently, because God is God and is able to create, God has space for everything else as well. In distinction from this basic form of the divine omnipresence, it is also the omnipresence of God. The love that God has in God as the triune God has also turned and manifested itself in freedom outwards.

We have spoken about the general and special presence of God in creation. By the general presence, we understood the presence of God in creation in its totality. By the special presence of God, we speak of the presence of God in the definite and distinct action of God in the work of revelation and reconciliation within creation.

A third distinction with the presence of God is the presence of God in the Word of God as revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. God is present in these other places too. Indeed, God is present everywhere. However, God is present in them and everywhere because and as God present here. God is first present here, and then there and everywhere. God is present here primarily, there and everywhere secondarily. God is present to Israel and the church as the body of humanity taken up into the covenant of God, but God is present in Jesus Christ as the Head that constitutes and controls this body.

2. The Constancy and Omnipotence of God

All the perfections of the freedom of God and therefore of the love of God, and therefore the one divine essence, we recognize and express in the idea that God is constant. We might recall several biblical texts that remind us of this truth: Exodus 3:14, Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, Psalm 102:23-24, James 1:17, Hebrews 6:13-20

In the tradition of Christian theology, this idea raises the question of the immutability of God. God is immutable, the subject determining the predicate, and the subject by the revelation of the divine self. If the immutable as such is in fact be God, this is undoubtedly the most dangerous assumption conceivable not only for the doctrine of God in particular, but for every statement about God. After all, the purely immobile is death. Divine immutability includes life. In biblical thinking, God is certainly the immutable, but as the immutable God is the living God and God possesses a mobility and elasticity that is no less divine than the perseverance of God, and which confirms the divinity of this perseverance no less than its own divinity naturally requires confirmation by the divine perseverance of God.

In the Bible, God does in fact repent, as in Genesis 6:6-7. God can certainly repent of having promised or demonstrated the help of God to Israel in different ways. God can retract in the most terrible manner by showing God as the One God is in wrath. However, God cannot repent of being the One God is. The world exists beside and outside God. This sets two limits. The first is against all speculation of a monistic kind. The second is against all speculation of a dualistic kind, so that one ascribes immutability to the Creator, and mutability to what God created. This involves the denial of a real participation by the Creator in the existence and essence of those God created, and the corresponding denial of a real participation by the one created in the immutability of the Creator. On this view, it will be very hard to avoid the practical conclusion that death is God, or that God is dead.

The Incarnation could logically mean curtailment or compromise of the immutable divine nature. However, in reality, it means the revelation of divine immutability in its perfection, a perfection that we recognize in God the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer only because God is the God revealed, present, and active in the way God is present in Jesus Christ. We can see this in Paul in Philippians 2:5-11. In this text, Jesus Christ emptied himself. Paul did not believe that in all this Jesus Christ surrendered, lost, or even curtailed His deity. Positively, this self-emptying refers to the fact that, without detracting from His being in the form of God, He was able and willing to assume the form of a servant and go about in the likeness of humanity. In this way, those whom God created could know Christ only as one of the entities God created. He alone could know Himself as God. In other words, He was ready to accept a position in which people in the world could know Jesus as God. God concealed the divine glory of Jesus from the world. So far from being contrary to the nature of God, it is of the divine

essence to possess the freedom to be capable of this self-offering and self-concealment, and beyond this to make use of this freedom, and therefore really to effect this self-offering and to give the divine self up to this self-concealment. The meaning and the goal of this self-emptying is the self-humiliation of God. In this above all, God conceals from humanity who God is. Yet, here above all God is truly God. Thus, above all because of this, God will also reveal the deity of God by the power of God. The self-emptying of God and self-humiliation of God does not compromise the deity of God. Rather, self-emptying and self-humiliation reveal the true divinity of God.

As an aside, this is the first shadow that hangs over the orthodox doctrine of the divine decree. The second is that not only in its less good elements, but also in what are undoubtedly its good elements, in marked contradiction to the Bible passages quoted in support, it is so obviously an abstract general doctrine of the essence and relation of God to the created world, in other words, a general doctrine of providence.

We must now move to the doctrine of the divine omnipotence, with the earliest creeds considering this the one attribute of God necessary to state.

The first step is to recognize that we are not dealing with any kind of power, or power in itself, or even omnipotence in itself and in general. We have to do with the power of God, and in this way with omnipotence and real power.

The second step is to recognize that the might of God never at any place precedes right, but is always and everywhere associated with it. Like all true might, the might of God is legitimate power as the power of the holiness, righteousness, and wisdom of God grounded in itself and in the love and freedom of the divine person. The might of God is the power that is the origin of legality and that God always exercises in the fullness of

this legality. The might of God is the power that never lacks the dignity of the Trinity and Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer.

The third step is to recognize that the omnipotence of God is naturally the power manifest in the activity of God. The omnipotence of God is the power in the activity of the One who fulfills this work, and who reveals God as the One God within this work.

Our fourth step is to maintain that the omnipotence peculiarly belonging to God is the very specific capacity that has real content, is not neutral, and is concrete. God has the power, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be God and to live of and by God.

Our fifth step is to maintain that as the concrete power of God, determined in relation both to God and to the world, the power of God is power of everything. This means the power of all powers, the power in and over them all. By the power of God, God creates and tolerates other powers. In this, the power of God is always power in over and over them, and God is always first and last the only one who is full of power. God is not at any point limited or determined by them, but at every point, God limits and determines them.

God knows and wills, which are the only ways God can be omnipotent.

First, the divine knowledge and will as the knowledge and will of the divine omnipotence and therefore as itself omnipotent, we must affirm first that with the two statements “God knows” and “God wills” we are describing the one total essence of God. The knowledge of God is who God is, and again the will of God is who God is.

Second, the knowledge of God is the will of God and the will of God the knowledge of God.

Third, the divine knowledge and will, being divine, is free, superior in relation to all the objects distinct from itself. Rightly understood, to speak of God willing all things

consists in God having power over all things. Within this sphere, which is itself the only sphere of being, God wills everything. The something God wills can therefore mean that God loves, affirms, and confirms it, that God creates, upholds, and promotes it out of the fullness of divine life. This willing by God can also mean that in virtue of the same love God hates, disavows, rejects, and opposes it as that which withstands and lacks and denies what is loved, affirmed and confirmed by God and created, upheld and promoted by God. God still wills it in the sense that God takes it seriously in this way and takes up this position over against it.

Fourth, the divine knowledge possesses the character of foreknowledge in relation to all its objects. The knowledge of all things is what it is in eternal superiority to all things and eternal independence of all things. A knowledge of them that is complete in every respect, which not only eternally corresponds to them and follows them as human knowledge corresponds to and follows its objects, but is eternally their presupposition. It is not that God knows everything because it is, but that it is because God knows it. The right understanding of the freedom of the will of God excludes all those views that seek to represent the relation between God and the reality distinct from God as a relation of mutual limitation and necessity. The right understanding of the freedom of the will of God also excludes all non-deterministic and deterministic standpoints – the two really belong together. Pelagianism and fatalism are heathen insertions into Christian teaching.

Fifth, we turn to what I might call the essential nature of the divine knowledge and will, its character as real knowing and willing. Nothing less is at stake here than the spirituality and personality of the omnipotent God, and therefore the love in which God is the free God, and should be taken with absolute seriousness and not merely understood as figurative or isolated facts. Our ability to understand the divine knowledge as real

knowledge also depends on it. The same is true of our ability to understand the divine will as real will without affecting the fact that it embraces everything as a single act and is completely free in itself. Because the will is also involved, we will have to put the question in a twofold form. However, first we must ask to what extent the divine knowledge is real, divine, true, and genuine knowledge. We have now to speak of the genuineness and reality of the divine will, of its character as a true will. We have now to make explicit the recognition of the spirituality and personality of this One who acts in omnipotence and omnipresence. The will of God is in all things as the eternal living act of God, and it is wholly and utterly free in itself. In this, it is true, genuine power and will.

How can an omnipotent will really be a will, a purpose, the setting of a goal, or a resolve? We are again overlooking the fact that omnipotence of God does not merge into the omni-causality of God. If we were, we would have to speak of God as One who is the prisoner of the power of God, and therefore not of divine omnipotence at all.

If God does not know and will, God does not love either. A mere blind force can possess power and efficacy, but it cannot love. There is love only where there is knowing and willing. However, the divine knowing and willing meets us in the divine revelation and reconciliation, wholly and altogether as love. As the love of God meets us there, the knowing willing of God also meets us. Because the love of God meets us, we must now say as the final thing about the omnipotence of God that we must recognize the omnipotence of the divine knowing and willing, the only real divine omnipotence, as the omnipotence of love. It is in this way that God knows and wills, in the love of God. This is what we mean by knowing and willing in its divine origin and truth. This is the eternal knowing and the eternal will that determines all other knowing and willing by the grace

of creation. It is love. It seeks its own only in fellowship with another. With the statement that the omnipotence of God is the omnipotence of the knowing and willing of God, we have confirmed the one essence of God in its twofold nature, that the freedom of God is the freedom of the love of God. We can see this in I Corinthians 1:24.

3. The Eternity and Glory of God

Eternity is God in the sense in which God is simultaneous, without separation, distance, or contradiction. Eternity is not time, although time is a form of the creation of God. We distinguish time from eternity by the fact that in it, beginning, middle, and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present, and future. Eternity is the duration that is lacking to time, as one can see clearly at the middle point of time, in the temporal present and in its relationship to the past and the future. Eternity has and is the duration that is lacking to time. It has and is simultaneity. Eternity is not an infinite extension of time both backwards and forwards. Time can have nothing to do with God. The infinity of its extension cannot help it. For even and especially in this extension, there is the separation, distance, and contradiction that mark it as time and distinguish it from eternity as the one God created from the Creator. It is quite correct to understand the idea of eternity and therefore God in this clear antithesis. In this duration, God is free. God is free to be constant, and so we may put our trust in the fact that God is. The reason why God is free to be constant is that time has no power over God. As the One who endures, God has all power over time. God is God in the concept of the eternity of God. This means that it is a poor and shortsighted view to understand the eternity of God only from the standpoint that it is the negation of time. Boethius gives the positive quality of eternity. Aquinas offered the definition of “Total, simultaneous and complete possession of unlimited life.” This positive meaning of the concept of eternity suggests that the statement that God is

eternal tells us what God is, rather than what God is not. We cannot understand the eternity of God as pure timelessness. Since it became time, and God, without ceasing to be the eternal God, took time and made it the possession of God, we have to confess that God was able to do this. God was not only able to have and give time as the Creator, but in Jesus Christ, God was able to be temporal. True eternity includes this possibility, the potentiality of time. True eternity has the power to take time to itself, this time, the time of the Word and Son of God. Eternity has the power itself to be temporal in Christ. In Jesus Christ, eternity has been revealed as its power. A. Ritschl saw eternity as the unchanging continuity and identity of the divine will in relation to its goal, so that in all the changes in things that denote the alteration in the working of God, God remains the same and maintains the final goal and plan in which God creates and governs the world. The will of God is directed toward the kingdom of God.

God is pre-temporal in that the existence of God precedes human existence and the existence of all things.

God is supra-temporal in that eternity embraces time on all sides. The eternity of God accompanies time. Time may also accompany the eternity of God which creates it and in which it has its goal. The eternity of God goes with time. The eternity of God is in time. Time itself is in eternity. Its whole extension from beginning to end, each single part of it, every epoch, every life-time, every new and closing year, every passing hour, are all in eternity like a child in the arms of its mother. Time does not limit eternity. Eternity is in the midst, just as God is in the midst with us. It is not a divine preserve. On the contrary, by giving us time, God also gives us eternity. Our decisions in time occur with a responsibility to eternity that is not partial but total, and we may and must understand and accept the confidence with which we can undertake them as a complete

confidence that we gain from eternity. Having loved us from eternity, and granted us from eternity our existence, fellowship with God, life in hope and eternal life itself, God also loves us here and now, in the temporality ordained for us from eternity, wholeheartedly and unreservedly. The result is that any doubt or lack of assurance is a burden that we impose on ourselves, while from the side of God there is only one message even to our life in its temporality. Jesus Christ is taken seriously when we see that as He comes between the two spheres, He makes the one really past and the other no less future, constituting time itself the way from this past to this future. Again, we rightly understand the existence and antithesis of the two spheres when He is seen in this relationship to them. Jesus Christ is the One who has made the antithesis of these spheres the antithesis between past and future, thus making time itself something new by giving it its center in Him. For He has not merely explained and interpreted it as the way from this past to this future, from the old to the new aeon, but has also made this way, in the power of the Creator of time and of all things. The conception of time means that human existence moves in Jesus Christ out of the first and into the second sphere. The fact that we have time and live in time means that we live in this turning. The future is not this empty time. The future is the coming new age with all its benefits for which we are set free in Jesus Christ.

God is post-temporal, in that we move to God as we come from God and may accompany God. We move towards God. God is, when time will be no more.

We now reach the discussion of the glory of God. God has and is glory. We can say that the glory of God is the dignity and right of God to prove and declare, to denote and to become conspicuous everywhere apparent as the One God is. God does this negatively by distinguishing God from what is not, and positively by showing God in

various ways. It is further the dignity and right of God to create recognition for God, in some sense to impose or intrude in such a way that no one can overlook God or forget God. We cannot possibly avoid God, nor can the reality that is distinct from God exist at all without God. Looking back on what has been said, we may say that the glory of God is the competence of God to make use of the omnipotence of God as the One who is omnipresent, and to exercise lordship in virtue of the ever-present knowledge and will of God. However, we must add at once, the glory of God is not only the right of God, but also the power of God to do all this. It is the power of the divine being of God to be in control and to act as God. As it is this right and power, it is also the actual accomplishment of all this.

To sum up, the glory of God is God in the truth, capacity, and act in which people know God as God. This truth, capacity, and act are the triumph, the very core, of the freedom of God. For at the core of the being of God, and therefore in the glory of God, is the freedom of God to love. God is the One who seeks and finds fellowship, creating and maintaining and controlling it. God is relationship in the Trinity and the basis and prototype of all relationship. In the fact that God is glorious, God loves. The New Testament term is *doxa*. What is the more precise meaning of the honor and the glory of God, of God as the source and radiance of light? How far does it belong to God in the fullness of the divine God to be glorious in the sense described, to have and to be the source and radiance of light, the possibility and actuality of that outshining, the self-declaration to which we have referred?

First, if we start from our first answer, we must say that the glory of God consists in the fact that the being of God is the fullness and self-sufficiency of God.

Second, as the living God is the source of light, God also is the radiance of light. Standing in contrast to all other beings and marked off from them, God is the radiance of light that reaches all other beings and permeates them. Distance does not separate God from them, but changes such distance into proximity. The omnipotence of God is the positive meaning of the freedom of God. Thus, the light of God is omnipotent light, and so omnipresent light.

Third, what reaches us through them is the power, kingdom, and glory of God, and therefore who God is.

Fourth, the glory of God is revealed when God is not present in vain, when the distinction and worth of the person of God are recognized and acknowledged as such, when to that extent they reach over to us. When there is light and light shines, there is an illuminating and an illumination.

The final thing that we must say in this connection about the glory of God is that it is God in the truth, power, and act of the self-glorification of God on and in and through that which is dark in itself because it is distinct from God and is not divine, but opposed to the divine.

The concept that lies ready to our hand here, and which may serve legitimately to describe the element in the idea of glory that we still lack, is that of beauty. If we can and must say that God is beautiful, to say this is to say how God enlightens, convinces, and persuades us. The concept of the beauty of God describes the shape and form in which revelation takes place and the form of its power. The concept of the beauty is to say that God has this superior force, this power of attraction, which speaks for itself, which wins and conquers, in the fact that God is beautiful, divinely beautiful, and beautiful in the unique way God is beautiful. God has beauty as a fact and a power in such a way that

God acts as the One who gives pleasure, creates desire and rewards with enjoyment. God does it because God is pleasant, desirable, full of enjoyment, because God is the One who is pleasant, desirable, full of enjoyment, because first and last God alone is that which is pleasant, desirable and full of enjoyment. God love us as the One who is worthy of love as God. This is what we mean when we say that God is beautiful. We do not need to develop an aesthetic view to speak in this way. We cannot include the concept of beauty with the main concepts of the doctrine of God. It is not a leading concept. We speak of the beauty of God only in explanation of the glory of God. However, some texts point us this direction: Psalm 104:1-2, and 45:2. We must also include the Song of Songs as part of the biblical material that helps us reflect upon the importance of beauty.

In all this, glory awakens joy, and is itself joyful. Glory is not merely a glory that is solemn, good, and true, and which in its perfection and sublimity, might be gloomy or at least joyless. Joy in and before God has an objective basis. Glory is something in God that justifies, obliges, summons and attracts us to do this. That which attracts us to joy in God is the inalienable form of the glory of God and the indispensable form of the knowledge of the glory of God. Glory is beautiful in the love and freedom of God in the essence of God as God and in all the works of God, beautiful in the form in which God is all this.

In fact, theology is a peculiarly beautiful science. An extreme form of Philistinism would find theology distasteful. The theologian who has no joy in his or her work is not a theologian at all. Sulky faces, morose thoughts and boring ways of speaking are intolerable in this science. May God deliver us from what the Catholic Church reckons one of the seven sins of the monk, sloth, in respect of the great spiritual truths with which theology has to do. However, we must know that God can keep us from it.

The being of God speaks for the beauty of God in the revelation of God. All that we can do here is to indicate by several examples the fact that this is so. First, we note that the unfolding of the being of God in the attributes of God has a beauty to it. Second, the tri-unity of God has a beauty to it. A third example of this beauty is the Incarnation. These are the ways the being of God attracts us in its beauty. What we wanted to know was how God in the glory of God, in the self-declaration of God, makes God clear to humanity. The statement about the beauty of God answers this question in an appropriate parenthesis. The glory of God is the truth power, and act of the self-declaration of God and therefore of the love of God. Beauty forces us to look away from self, away from other created things and toward God. Glorifying and honoring God can only mean following God. To give honor to God means that in our existence, words and actions, God conforms us to the existence of God. We accept our life as determined by the co-existence of God, and therefore reject any arbitrary self-determination. Self-determination comes about when those whom God created honor God in harmony with the predetermination of God instead of in opposition to it. It happens when we accommodate ourselves, not to the dominion of any power, but to that of the One to whom alone there belongs right and might. In this sense, then, the glorifying of God consists simply in the life-obedience of the creature that knows God. It has no alternative but to thank and praise God.

Part 2 – 1942

Chapter VII – The Election of God

31. The Problem of a Correct Doctrine of the Election of Grace

The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel because of all words that one can say or hear it is the best. God elects humanity. God is for humanity as the One who loves in

freedom. Election has its ground in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because God is both electing God and elected humanity in One. Election is part of the doctrine of God because originally the election by God of humanity is predestination not merely of humanity, but of God as well. The function of election is to bear basic testimony to eternal, free, and unchanging grace as the beginning of all the ways and works of God.

1. The Orientation of the Doctrine

Theology must begin with Jesus Christ, and not with general principles. Theology must also end with God, and not with supposedly self-evident general conclusions from what is particularly enclosed and disclosed in God. We should still not have learned to say, “God,” correctly if we thought it enough simply to say “God.” We must not be so exact, so clever, so literal, that our doctrine of God remains only a doctrine of God. We must demonstrate its Christian character by avoiding such abstraction. This fact, that God is God only in this way and not any other, we must now make explicit.

If it is true, that it pleased the fullness of God to dwell in Jesus Christ, as in Colossians 1:19, then in a Christian doctrine of God this further step is unavoidable. Jesus Christ is indeed God in the movement of God toward humanity as represented in the one man, Jesus of Nazareth, in the covenant of God with this people, and in the being and activity of God among and toward humanity. Without the Son sitting at the right hand of the Father, God would not be God. However, the Son is not only very God. The Son is also called Jesus of Nazareth. The Son is also humanity, and as such the Son is the Representative of the people that in Him and through Him is united as He is with God, being with Him the object of the divine movement. That we know God and have God only in Jesus means that we can know God and have God only with the human being, Jesus of Nazareth, and with the people that He represents as the Son. Apart from this person, and apart from this people, God would be a different or alien God. According to the Christian perception, such a god would not be God at all. According to the Christian

perception, the true God is in this movement toward humanity. Further, in the Son and through the Son God moves toward other people in their unity with the Son.

We approach two aspects of the one truth. In the decision by which God institutes, maintains and directs this covenant, in the decision to be “in Jesus Christ,” God accomplishes something quite definite. God executes this decision in the movement God makes toward humanity, and therefore toward the Jesus of Nazareth and the humanity that He represents as the Son. The decision God made was to have this covenant partner. God also made the decision as to who this partner is and what will befall this partner. Of the election in the sense of the election of divine grace, the choice that God makes in grace, thus making the movement, and instituting, maintaining, and directing this covenant. What we have in mind is the election of grace. Election is a question of grace, and that means the love of God and the freedom of God. We must deal first with grace. The fact that God makes this movement in the institution of the covenant, the primal decision “in Jesus Christ,” which is the basis and goal of all the works of God. That is grace. Speaking generally, election is the demonstration, the overflowing of the love that is the being of God. God, who is entirely self-sufficient, who cannot know isolation, willed even in all divine glory to share divine life with another and to have that other as the witness of the glory of God. This love of God is grace. Divine love is the form of the deepest condescension. It occurs even where there is no question of claim or merit on the part of the other. Divine love is overflowing, free, unconstrained, and unconditioned. Divine love is merciful, making this movement of condescension, in such a way that, in taking to itself this other, it identifies itself with its need, and meets its plight by making it its own concern. Divine love is patient, not consuming this other, but giving it place, willing its existence for its own sake and for the sake of the goal appointed for it. God

elects another in love to have fellowship with God. God ordains that God should not be entirely self-sufficient as God might be. In this concept of election, we find reflected more clearly the other element in the being of God, that is, the freedom in which God is the One who eternally loves. The concept of election means that grace is truly grace. It means that God owes the grace of God to no one, and that no one can deserve it. It means that grace cannot be the subject of a claim or a right on the part of the one upon whom it is directed. It means that it is the determination and decision of the will of God.

Encountering humanity in this free love, God becomes the companion of humanity. That is what God determined to do “in Jesus Christ.” In virtue of divine ascendancy and of this relationship, God must have both the first and the last word concerning those with whom God has chosen to partner. God is the judge of this partner in the most comprehensive sense. God is for this covenant partner both the One by whom humanity will experience judgment and also the One according to whom humanity must judge itself. God is for humanity the criterion, the standard, the question of the good or the evil, the rightness or the wrongness, of human being and activity.

We must now take up in a specific way the doctrine of predestination. In the Old Testament, we find this teaching under the concept of the election of Israel as the people of God. In the New Testament, we will have to deal extensively with Romans 9-11. The final word is a divine Yes to the covenant partner. We find the New Testament also concerned with this final divine Yes, as in I Peter 2:9, II Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 8:30, Mark 4:11, and Ephesians 1:3-4.

For Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, the concept of double predestination dominates, in that God elects to grace and wrath. Reformed dogmatics thought they ought to balance against the concept of the election of grace that of an election of wrath.

We may establish first a point that all serious conceptions of the doctrine have in common.

They all find the nerve of the doctrine in the fact that it characterizes the grace of God as free and divine. In electing, God decides according to the good pleasure of God, which is holy and righteous. Because the God who elects is constant, omnipotent, and eternal, the good-pleasure by which God decides, and the decision itself, are independent of all other human decisions. Grace is the divine movement and condescension because of which people belong to God and God to people. All serious conceptions of the doctrine do at least aim at this recognition of the freedom of the grace of God. They aim at an understanding of grace as grace. For what kind of grace is it that is conditioned and constrained, and not free grace and freely electing grace? What kind of God is it who in any sense of the term has to be gracious, whose grace does not belong to the personal and free good-pleasure of God.

All serious conceptions of the doctrine also agree that in this free decision of God, we have to do with the mystery of God as the divine resolve and decree whose basis is hidden and inscrutable. God did not admit human beings into the counsel of God as God made this election. Nor can we subsequently call God to give an account or answer in respect of it. The will of God knows no source. The will of God is an absolute source, the ultimate source of all. As such, that it wills to be known, honored, and obeyed.

A third point unites all serious conceptions of the doctrine of predestination. To the confession of the mystery of the freedom of God in the election of grace they all quite definitely relate, in some sense as basis, the confession that in the mystery of divine freedom, God always does that which is worthy of the righteousness of God. We are not bowing before the caprice of a tyrant. Our submission cannot be such that a remaining

and increasing complaint and resistance still accompanies it. Rather, of ourselves, of our own better knowledge, we will be silent.

We must take as our starting-point the fact that this divine choice or election is the decision of the divine will that God fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and which had as its goal the sending of the Son of God. As such, election has always in God the character of grace. Election is divine freedom as the One who loves in freedom. We must not seek the ground of this election anywhere else than in the free love of God. A basis for election in anything other than this free love of God would not be the election fulfilled in Jesus Christ. What takes place in this election is always that God is for us and for the world God created, independent of God while also maintained by God. The election of God has the sending of the Son in view. In the Son and through the Son, God moves toward the world. God creates and sustains the world. However, more importantly, God works on it and in it by giving the divine self to it. The election of God means that the will for fellowship God actively demonstrated to the world in a way that surpasses anything that could be expected or claimed. If we describe this movement as election, then we also emphasize this movement as the active demonstration of the love of God. The Gospel of John memorably describes this love.

John 3:16 (NRSV)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Whatever may be the inner link in the election by God between that giving of the Son and the faith in the Son by which the intended salvation is effected, we can say this much. In this election, God loved the world. This election is a work in which God meets the world in a way that is for Jesus of Nazareth, and in Him for the whole race, and therefore for the world. God does not meet the world with indifference or hatred. God does not will to be

without the world or against the world, a fact seen clearly when we speak of election. When we speak of election, we speak of the gospel. God has decided for this loftiest and radical movement toward that which God has created, ordaining and constituting God as its friend and benefactor. When we hear of the election by God, we also hear the Yes of God to the world.

2. The Foundation of the Doctrine

What is the source of the doctrine of predestination? We need to recall the basic rule of all church dogmatics. No single item of Christian doctrine has any legitimate ground unless we can understand and explain it as a part of the responsibility laid upon the hearing and teaching church towards the self-revelation of God attested in Scripture.

First, the tradition of the church is an occasion and a supplement to the doctrine of election. We need to ask of this tradition its true origin, and to what extent it may or may not be properly adapted in this respect to serve as supplement.

Second, we must enquire into the foundation of the doctrine in the divine revelation quite independently of its value and usefulness. We must then construct and expound the doctrine in accordance with that foundation. With this procedure, we can determine the pedagogic value and usefulness of the doctrine. Of course, Calvin saw this value in the trust of the mercy of God, it demonstrates the glory of God, and it inclines us to a true humility.

Third, we must seek the facts in the self-revelation of God attested in Scripture. We do not have the right to go to the Bible with a question dictated to us by experience that has only an empirical basis, in order then to understand the statements of the Bible as an answer to this question. In that case, we seek confirmation of the presuppositions that underlie the question. Both Augustine and Calvin are victims of this approach.

Fourth, the concept of predestination is not unequivocal. Who and what is it that in authority, time, and logic is prior to everything else. God is prior to everything else. God is prior even in election. Otherwise, God would not be God. God is the Almighty and therefore free. What we must enquire is whether it is in fact correct to do it. We might need to understand the divine government of the world in the light of the divine election of grace. We can believe and understand election itself. We might also believe and understand that God rules the world, and the world God really rules. We do this as we recognize and proclaim the electing God, the Lord, the Subject of that all-comprehensive activity? As the electing God, God is the Almighty. Thomas Aquinas placed predestination to that of divine providence. Bonaventura did the same. Calvin broke with this tradition. The Subject of the election is always unconditioned, the One whose freedom and love has determined limited who God is in particular, and as such to be omnipotent and sovereign. The true God is Lord and Ruler of all things and all events. Nothing is outside God. Everything is efficacious and significant by the will of God. God predetermines everything. Yet, God does not rule absolutely. On the contrary, such a god is a false god and idol. We can conceive of the true God only as God is actual as Lord and Ruler. We shall do so as we conceive of God in the determination and limitation that are peculiar to God, which is the characteristics of the presence and activity of God in the world. What makes God the divine Ruler is the fact that the rule of God is determined and limited. God has concretely determined and limited God after the manner of a true king. We can never expect any decisions from God except those that rest upon this concrete determination and limitation of the being of God, upon this primal decision made in the eternal being of God. We will not consider predestination in a concept of the deity of God that is true deity because it is self-determined and self-limited. In so doing,

we shall perceive both fact and the extent that the true God is the true Ruler of the world, the omnipotent sovereign over all things. We must know first who this Ruler is and what God wills and does in that rule. However, this concrete aspect of the rule of God results from our consideration and concept of the election. It is there that God is who and what God is, in contrast with all false gods and idols.

We can now attempt to give a positive answer to the question of the origin of the doctrine of election. The election in some sense does denote the basis of all the relationships between God and humanity, between God in the earliest movement toward humanity and humanity in its earliest determination by this divine movement. It is in the decision in favor of this movement, in the self-determination of God and the resultant determination of humanity, in the basic relationship that is enclosed and fulfilled within God, that God is who God is. The primal relationship belongs to the doctrine of God. The doctrine of God would be incomplete without the extension necessitated by this relationship, without the inclusion of the decision that precedes, characterizes, and gives rise to all the work of God. The decision in which God gives the divine self to humanity, and based on which God is the One who has willed and done this, who has indeed given the divine self to humanity.

Who and what is the God who is to be known at the point upon which Scripture concentrates our attention and thoughts? Who and what is the God who rules and feeds the people of God, creating and maintaining the whole world for its benefit, and guiding it according to the good-pleasure of God, according to the good-pleasure of the will of God as it is directed towards this people? Our attention and thoughts should and must be concentrated, and then from first to last the Bible directs us to the name of Jesus Christ. It is in this name that we discern the divine decision in favor of the movement towards this

people, the self-determination of God as Lord and Shepherd of this people. Under this name, God became a human being who then became the representative of the whole people that hastens towards this human being and derives from God. Under this name, God realized in time and became an object of human perception and Covenant-partner of the people determined by God from eternity. Under this name, God possesses this people. Under this name, God established and equipped the people that bear the name to be a light to the nations, the hope, the promise, the invitation and the summoning of all peoples and the demand and the judgment set over the whole of humanity. As all these things occurred under this name, the will of God was done. In these occurrences, we know the good-pleasure of the will of God, and therefore the purpose and orientation of the work of God, as Creator of the world and Controller of history. We will discover no greater depth in the being and work of God than that revealed in these happenings and under this name, Jesus Christ. As we have to do with Jesus Christ, we have to do with the electing God. For election is obviously the first, basic, and decisive thing that we have always to say concerning this revelation, this activity, this presence of God in the world, and therefore concerning the eternal decree and the eternal self-determination of God that bursts through and is manifested at this point. Already this self-determination, as a confirmation of the free love of God, is itself the election or choice of God. God chooses to be God in this determination. God chooses to move toward humanity and accept humanity as a partner in covenant. God chooses in Jesus Christ to give life to the people of God. God chooses to be part of the history of a people. God chooses a people under its head, Jesus Christ, to be a sign of blessing and judgment, an instrument of love, and the sacrament of the movement of God toward humanity. God chooses to work with this people with the end in view. If we would know who God is, and what the meaning and

purpose of election by God is, then we must look away from all others, and excluding all side-glances or secondary thoughts, we must look only upon and to the name of Jesus Christ, and the existence and history of the people of God enclosed within Christ. If we listen to what the Bible says concerning humanity, then at the point where our attention and thoughts are allowed to rest there is revealed the elect person, and united in Christ and represented by Christ as an elect people. However, just as truly there is revealed the electing God. The elect One is true human being according to the self-revelation of God, and that revelation, being the revelation by God, has the decisive word concerning humanity as well. In other words, if we would know what election is, then we must look away from all others, and excluding all side-glances or secondary thoughts we must look only upon the name of Jesus Christ and upon the actual existence and history of the people whose beginning and end are enclosed in the mystery of the name, Jesus Christ. We perceive that the statements of Scripture concerning God and humanity converge at this point. Therefore, we must formulate and understand the statements concerning the election by God of humanity, for election takes place at this point.

We have answered positively the question of the basis of the doctrine and the standpoint that we ought to take up in relation to it. Election is that which takes place at the very center of the divine self-revelation. In face of the whole history of the doctrine, we have inserted a corrective and brought a standard to light. The name of Jesus Christ, according to the divine self-revelation, forms the focus at which the two decisive beams of the truth forced upon us converge. We find on the one hand the electing God and on the other the elected humanity. It is to this name, then, that all Christian truth must look, from this name that it must derive, and to this name that it must strive. This view is not an innovation, as Ephesians 1:4-5, 11, and 3:10 show.

3. The Place of the Doctrine in Dogmatics

Barth admits that he does not place the discussion of predestination in a self-evident location. No previous dogmatic writer has done this. Such an innovation is one for which Barth needs to give account. Some elements of the reformed tradition placed it immediately after the doctrine of God and before a discussion of creation. Another tradition placed it after a discussion of creation and providence. Another tradition disconnects it from the doctrine of God and places it after a discussion of human nature and sin, and thus as an aspect of the doctrine of salvation.

In the position granted by Barth, he believes he follows the teaching of election in the biblical testimony to God and to the work and revelation of God. God elects humanity. God determines to move toward humanity, and then determines humanity for God. Such determination is the substance and basis of the prophetic and apostolic testimony. In this self-determination, God wills for humanity to love and fear and God, to believe in and worship God as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. We must understand every portion of the biblical witness in light of this reality. In virtue of this self-determination, God wills to be God in Jesus Christ. As such, God is the Lord of Israel and the church. As such, God is the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer of the universe and humanity. The doctrine of election deals with this primal decision. We treat of the doctrine as understood in this way within the context of the doctrine of God. We put it at the head of all other doctrines. It has a relationship to all that follows as a witness to the fact that all the works of God and ways of God have their origin in the grace of God. In virtue of this self-determination of God, God is from the first the gracious God. This self-determination is identical with the decree of the movement of God toward humanity. This movement is always the best thing that could happen to humanity. The reality and revelation of this movement is Jesus Christ. Nothing has its purpose, being, or

continuance apart from grace. Even sin, death, the devil and hell do not constitute any exception to the general rule. For even in these, the knowing and willing God is gracious, even though they take effect as negation. Even the enemies of God are the servants of God and the servants of the grace of God. Thus, one cannot know God and the enemies of God at all unless one knows both they and their negative character and whole work of negation in the service that they render as instruments of the eternal, free, and immutable grace of God. God is gracious and continues gracious even where no grace exists. By grace, one can recognize the lack of grace. In the beginning, God is gracious. To know God always means to know the gracious God, even in sin and death, even under the dominion of the devil, even in the abyss of hell. Conversely, where can there be any true or serious knowledge of sin and the devil, of death and hell, if there is not also a knowledge of the gracious God?

33. The Election of Jesus Christ

The election of grace is the eternal beginning of all the ways and works of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God in the free grace of God determines the divine self for sinful humanity and sinful humanity for God. God therefore takes upon God the rejection of humanity with all its consequences, and elects humanity to participation in the glory of God.

1. Jesus Christ, Electing and Elected

John 1:1-2 (NRSV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.

“In the beginning was the Word.” The sentence tells us what was in the beginning. It does so in the form of a declaration about the Word. The Word was in the beginning. The Word as such is before and above all created relates. It stands completely outside the series of created things. It precedes all being and all time. It is like God. There was no time when the Word was not. This Word was in the beginning is distinct from

God. Within the sphere of this creation there is no time that is not enclosed by the eternity of this Word, no space that does not have its origin in its omnipresence and which is not for this reason conditioned by it. There is no possibility of escaping or avoiding this Word. However, the question arises, where, except in or with God, can there be any being that is “in the beginning” in this sense. The answer to this question is given in the second statement. “And the Word was with God.” Here the emphasis falls beyond all doubt upon the two final words. This statement constitutes an assertion concerning the Word. It declares that there was no being “in the beginning” in this sense except in and with God. However, the Word itself was in and with God. It was because the Word was “with God” in this sense that it could also be “in the beginning.” However, how could it be “with God” in this sense? What do we mean when we say that it belongs to God, or that its being is at the being of God. The answer to this question is given in the third statement; and as in the first two, we must again find our subject in “the Word.”

“And the Word was God.” The sentence tells us that the Word was itself God. It participated in the divine mode of being, in the divine being itself. If it is correct, then the exegesis of the 4th century was on the right track with its doctrine of the *homoousion*, or unity of substance of the three distinctive divine persons. The step taken in the third sentence is this, that the Word can be with God, and it can be “in the beginning,” because as person it participates in its own way with the person of the Father in the same dignity and perfection of the one divine being. John honored the title itself by applying it a few lines later as a predicate of Jesus. He offered no other exegesis of the concept apart from that to which he made this predication. Having touched lightly on this aspect of the concept, John moves forward quickly to his own conclusion. The Word was the bearer of life, the life that was the light of people in their age-long battle with darkness. The Word

became flesh. The Word was made known to us as the unknown God. Jesus was the life which was light, the revelation of God, the saying, or address, or communication in which God declares who God is to us. However, as this revelation God was not something other outside and alongside God. The Word was God within the revelation.

This teaching in John is quite consistent with other New Testament teaching: Colossians 1:15, 1:17-19, 2:9-10, I Corinthians 15:20, II Corinthians 4:4, Hebrews 1:3, Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 1:23, 3:9. In the name and person of Jesus Christ we are called upon to recognize the Word of God, the decree of God and the election of God at the beginning of all things, at the beginning of our own being and thinking, at the basis of our faith in the ways and works of God. Alternatively, in this person we are called upon to recognize the beginning of the Word and decree and election of God, the conclusive and absolute authority in respect of the aim and origin of all things. In the decision of God, all the works of God, both inward and outward, rest upon the freedom of God. We say that in so far as these works are done in time, they rest upon the eternal decision of God by which time is founded and governed God elects. It is this that precedes all other being and happening.

The point of this reflection upon biblical texts is this. The choice and election of God is the decision by God that John describes in John 1:1-2. Because of whom Jesus is, this is an election of grace. In the beginning, God anticipated and determined in the power of love and freedom, knowing and willing, that the goal and meaning of all the deals of God with the as yet non-existent universe should be the fact that in the Son, God would be gracious towards humanity, uniting God with humanity. In the beginning, the Father chose to establish this covenant with humanity by the giving up the Son for humanity. In the beginning, it was the choice of the Son to be obedient to grace, and

therefore to offer up Himself and to become a human being in order that this covenant might be made a reality. In the beginning, it was the resolve of the Holy Spirit that this covenant with humanity would not disturb the unity of God. In its simplest and most comprehensive form, the dogma of predestination consists in the assertion that the divine predestination is the election of Jesus Christ.

However, the concept of election has a double reference, to the elector and to the elected. The name of Jesus Christ has within itself the double reference; the One called by this name is both God and person. Thus, we may divide the simplest form of the dogma into the two assertions, that Jesus Christ is the electing God and that Christ is elected humanity.

Jesus Christ is the electing God. We must begin with this assertion because by its content it has the character and dignity of a basic principle, and because the other assertion, that Jesus Christ is elected humanity, can be understood only in the light of it. First, Christ is the reconciliation between God and humanity. Christ is not only the Elected. Christ is also the Elector, and in the first instance, we must understand the election of Christ as active. So much depends upon our acknowledgement of the Son, as the Subject of this predestination. After all, it is only in the Son that it is revealed to us as the predestination of God, and therefore of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Only as we believe in the Son can we also believe in the Father and the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the one divine election. Of Jesus Christ, we know nothing more surely and definitely than this, that in free obedience to His Father He elected to be a human being and to do the will of God. If God elects us too, then it is in and with this election of Jesus Christ, in and with this free act of obedience on the part of the Son. The election of Jesus Christ is the eternal choice and decision of God. Our first assertion tells us that Jesus Christ is the

electing God. We must not ask concerning any other but Christ. In the depth of the Godhead, we shall not encounter any other but Christ. There is no such thing as Godhead in itself. Godhead is always the Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as an absolute decree. There is no such thing as a will of God apart from the will of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ reveals to us our election as an election that Christ makes, by the will of Christ that is also the will of God. Christ tells us that He is the One who elects us. In the very foreground of our existence in history we can and should cleave to Christ because in the eternal background of history, in the beginning with God, the only decree which was passed, the only Word that was spoken and which prevails, was the decision that was executed by Christ.

Jesus Christ is elected humanity. In making this second assertion, we are at one with the traditional teaching. However, the Christological assertion of tradition tells us no more than that in His humanity Jesus was one of the elect. In virtue of His divinity, He was ordained and appointed Lord and Head of all others, the organ and instrument of the whole election of God and the revelation and reflection of the election of those who were elected with Him. It tells us that before all created reality, the eternal divine decision as such has as its object and content the existence of this one created being, the man Jesus of Nazareth, and the work of this man in His life and death, His humiliation and exaltation, His obedience and merit. It tells us that in and with the existence of this man, the eternal divine decision has as its subject and content the execution of the divine covenant with humanity, the salvation of all humanity. In this function, this man is the object of the eternal divine decision and foreordination. Jesus Christ is not merely one of the elect, but the elect of God. From the very beginning, as elected man He does not stand alongside

the rest of the elect, but before and above them as the One who is originally and properly the Elect. Even as the object of predestination, we must still understand Jesus Christ as truly the beginning of all the ways and works of God. Further, the election of the man Jesus is specifically His election to suffering. For this reason, it is the basic at of the divine election of grace. Further still, we have to see our own election in that of the man Jesus because His election includes our election within itself and because our election has its ground in Him. As Augustine observed, the Son is the Son only by grace. The elected man Jesus was foreordained to suffer and to die. This formulation of the message of Christmas in John 1:14 already includes within itself the message of Good Friday. For “all flesh is as grass.” The election of the man Jesus means that a wrath is kindled, a sentence pronounced and finally executed, a rejection actualized. It has been determined from all eternity. The election of the man Jesus carries within itself the election of a creation that is good according to the positive will of God and of humanity as fashioned after the divine image and foreordained to the divine likeness. However, this involves necessarily the rejection of Satan, the rebel angel who is the very sum and substance of the possibility that is not chosen by God. We see the very essence of the creature in its misunderstanding and misuse of its creation and destiny and in its desire to be as God, to be itself a god. Satan is the shadow that accompanies the light of the election of Jesus Christ. In the divine counsel, the shadow itself is necessary as the object of rejection. In himself and as such, humanity will always do as Adam did in Genesis 3. For this reason, humanity incurs the rejection that rests upon its temptation and corruption. Humanity stands under the wrath of God as the only answer God gives to the creature that abuses and dishonors its creatureliness. Exposed to the power of this divine negation, humanity is guilty of death. However, this humanity is, in the election of the man, Jesus, is loved

by God from eternity and elected to fellowship with God. Humanity was powerless against the insinuation of the tempter and seducer, thus became the enemy of God, and therefore incurred rejection and death. God, in love for humanity, transfers from all eternity the rejection that all people incurred to Christ, in whom God loves and elects them, and whom God elects at their head and in their place. For this reason, Christ is the Lamb slain; the crucified Jesus is the image of the invisible God. If others find election based upon the election of this man, Jesus, then that election is free grace. The ones who “in Him” God elects and makes partakers of grace are those who could see in themselves only lost sinners oppressed of the devil. If Christ did not stand at their head, God would reject them forever. They have nothing that they can call their own except their transgression. Yet, these transgressors are the ones on whose behalf God wills and extends the eternal love of God for Jesus Christ.

2. The Eternal Will of God in the Election of Jesus Christ

We have laid down and developed two statements concerning the election of Jesus Christ. The first is that Jesus Christ is the electing God, and therefore Christ is the Subject of the eternal election of grace. The second is that Jesus Christ is elected humanity, and therefore Christ is the object of the eternal election of grace. These two statements contain the whole dogma of predestination. Both statements speak of the one Jesus Christ, and God and humanity in Jesus Christ are both Elector and elect. In the beginning with God was this One, Jesus Christ. That is predestination.

Since I have strayed far from the classical formulation of the doctrine of election, I will need to spend some time justifying this departure.

First, I will begin with some epistemological observations. The eternal will of God is the election of Jesus Christ. Previous interpretations of the doctrine considered the

Subject and object of predestination as unknown. How do we know that Jesus Christ is the electing God and elected humanity? How do we know that we must ground all that one can say concerning this mystery in the name, Jesus Christ? We may ask the older exponents of the doctrine how they on their side know about God and humanity who are unknown. The decisive point is the reading of the Bible itself. It is the question where and how we find in the Bible itself the electing God and elected humanity, and therefore that reality of the divine election as a whole that must shape our thinking about the election and form the object of all our individual reflection concerning it. Proportionately, the passages in the Bible that speak expressly of the divine election and predestination are not numerous. In the Bible, the eternal God is the electing God. God acts as the electing God. Further, God elects temporal humanity. In respect of the divine work of creation, reconciliation, and redemption as attested in the Bible, we are in agreement with the classical exponents of the doctrine in that to a greater or less degree of distinctness all of us understand the name and person of Jesus Christ as the consummation and meaning of all that God says and does. Jesus Christ is the goal of the divine purpose for humanity. Yet, we must ask whether these Reformed thinkers applied themselves to these passages as constantly and continuously as they should have done, whether they were always as faithful to their own insights as we should expect, in this matter of predestination. We must answer these questions in the negative. How is it that anyone who interprets the Bible accurately in the matter of eternal election can refer it to some other reality, and not to Jesus Christ?

Second, with the traditional teaching and the testimony of Scripture, we think of predestination as eternal, preceding time and all the contents of time. We know the will of God apart from predestination only as the act in which from all eternity, God affirms

and confirms who God is. Under the concept of predestination, we say that in freedom God tied who God is to the universe. Under the concept of predestination, we confess the eternal will of the God who is free within the divine self, even in the sense that originally God wills and affirms who God is. However, we depart from the tradition when we say that for us there is no obscurity about this good-pleasure of the eternal will of God. For us, it is not a question-mark to which we can make answer only with an empty and question-begging assertion. When we assert the wisdom, mercy, and righteousness of this good-pleasure, we do not need to do so merely as a bald statement of fact. As we understand the freedom of the predestinating God, it opens up itself to our knowledge. It is this positive understanding that constitutes our deviation from Reformed tradition. The core of this innovation is that we must not separate ourselves from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We find the disclosure of predestination in Christ. As the self-revealing God, God is the electing God. The eternal will of God is the same as the eternal will of God above time, which reveals itself in time. It is a question of revelation. It is a question of the knowledge of the will of God. Even under this aspect, it is still a matter of the intelligent reverence, worship, and love of God. The will of God is Jesus Christ, and we know this will in the revelation of Jesus Christ. If we acknowledge this, then we cannot seek any other will of God. This will is the will of God. We must abide by it because God abides by it, because God allows us to abide by it. This decree of God is clear.

Third, the eternal will of God in the election of Jesus Christ is the will of God to give who God is for the sake of humanity as created by God and fallen from God. According to the Bible, this was what took place in the incarnation of the Son of God, in His death and passion, in His resurrection from the dead. We must think of this as the content of the eternal divine predestination.

What was it that God elected in the eternal election of Jesus Christ? Primarily, God elected or predestinated God. God determined to give and to send forth the Son. God determined to speak the Word of God. The beginning in which the Son became obedient to the Father was with God. The form and concretion of the will of God, was reached in God. All the freedom of God and love of God were identical with this decree, with the election of Jesus Christ. That is the one side of the matter. The other side is that God elected humanity. The decision of God and the ordination of God concerned humanity. God predestinated the Son to existence as the son of David. God decreed that God would sound forth the Word of God in the world of humanity. It was this man, Jesus Christ, who was in the beginning with God. For the present, we must be content with the simple assertion that there is already, a double predestination. It is obvious that when we confess that God has elected fellowship with humanity for God we are stating one thing, and when we confess that God has elected fellowship with God for humanity we are stating quite another. Both things together are the divine election. However, if the object is twofold so also is its content. It is one thing for God to elect and predestinate God to fellowship with humanity, and quite another for God to predestinate humanity to fellowship with God. If the Reformed teachers of predestination were right when they spoke of a duality, of predestination to salvation and perdition, then we may say already that in the election of Jesus Christ, God has ascribed to humanity the election of salvation, and the election of perdition to God in the Son.

We must speak first of this negative side. For in the eternal predestination of God, the first thing is that God has elected God as the Friend and Partner with humanity. God has elected fellowship with humanity. What was involved when God elected to become the Son of Man in Jesus Christ? In giving the divine self to this act, God ordained the

surrender of the impassability of God. The very fact that humanity was not God, but a creature, even though humanity was a good creature, had meant already a certain jeopardizing of the honor of God as whose instrument humanity had been created. Will humanity live by the Word of God? What a risk God ran when God willed to take up the cause of created humanity even in the original righteousness of humanity, when God constituted God as the God of humanity and ordained God to solidarity with humanity! God does not merely give God up to the risk and menace, but God exposes who God is to the actual onslaught and grasp of evil. For if God became a human being, what else can this mean but that God declared God guilty of the contradiction against God in which humanity was involved. God submitted who God is to the law of creation by which such a contradiction could be accompanied only by loss and destruction. God became the object of the wrath and judgment to which humanity brought itself. God took up the rejection that humanity had deserved. God tasted the damnation, death, and hell that ought to have been the portion of fallen humanity. If we would know what it was that God elected for God when God elected fellowship with humanity, then we can answer only that God elected our rejection. God helped it belong to God. God bore it and suffered it with all its most bitter consequences. For the sake of this choice and for the sake of humanity, God exposed the divine self to immense risk. God elected human suffering to become part of the divine life. Election by God is an election of grace, an election of love, an election to give the divine life, an election to empty and abase the divine life for the sake of the elect. Judas who betrays Christ, God elects as an apostle. In the sentence of Pilate, God elects a revelation of the judgment of God on the world. God elects the cross of Golgotha as the kingly throne of God. God elects the tomb in the garden as the scene of the being of God as the living God. This is how God loved the

world. That is how from all eternity the love of God was so selfless and genuine. In the eternal decree of God, these things did not involve any injustice to the creature, for by the same decree God decided that the risk that God allowed to threaten the creature and the plight into which God allowed it to plunge itself should be the risk of God and the plight of God. God created humanity. In that sense, God exposed humanity to the risk. Yet, from all eternity, God did not let humanity fall, but upheld humanity even when the temptation of Satan and the culpability of humanity resulted in a fall into sin. Thus, even when we think of humanity in this negative determination, we still think of humanity as the one whom God loved from all eternity in the Son. Humanity is the one to whom God gives who God is from all eternity in the Son and gave the divine self that God might represent humanity, gave the divine self that God might bear and suffer on the behalf of humanity what humanity had to suffer. When we say that God elected as the portion belong to God the negative side of the divine predestination, the reckoning with the weakness and sin of humanity, we say implicitly that this portion is not the portion of humanity. In so far, then, as predestination does contain a No, it is not a No spoken against humanity. As far as it does involve exclusion and rejection, it is not the exclusion and rejection of humanity. As far as it is directed to perdition and death, it is not directed to the perdition and death of humanity. God could have remained satisfied with God and with the impassible glory and blessedness of the divine life. However, God did not do so. God elected humanity as a covenant partner. In the Son, God elected the divine self as the covenant partner of humanity. What it means is that God willed to make good this affronting and disturbing of the majesty of God. God did this by bearing the inevitable wrath and perdition, by meditating on behalf of the one who must necessarily be rejected, who had necessarily fallen victim to damnation and death, but allowing the heart of God

to experience the wound by the wrath that, it had fallen upon humanity, could only have obliterated and destroyed humanity. The exchange that took place on Golgotha, when God chose as the throne of God the malefactors' cross, when the Son of God bore what humanity ought to have to borne, took place once and for all in fulfillment of the eternal will of God, and it can never be reversed. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. For this reason, faith in the divine predestination as such means faith in the non-rejection of humanity, or disbelief in the rejection of humanity. God does not reject humanity. In the eternal purpose of God, God is rejected in the Son. The self-giving of God consists, in the fact that God rejected in order that we might not be rejected. Predestination means that from all eternity God has determined upon the acquittal of humanity at cost to God. It means that God has ordained that in the place of the one acquitted God should be perishing, abandoned, and rejected, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Only if we are unbelieving or disobedient or unthankful in face of what is ordained for us, only if we misunderstand completely the divine predestination, can we think of this revelation as something that has to do with our own suffering.

We now turn to the other aspect of this same reality. What did God elect in the election of Jesus Christ? We have said already that not only did God elect fellowship with humanity for God, but God also elected fellowship with humanity. God willed humanity and elected humanity with the promise of eternal life. Life as a witness to the overflowing glory of God is eternal life. In this foreordination humanity exists in the beginning of all things, in the decree of God with God. We state at once that we have to do here with the positive content, the Yes of predestination. The danger-point of the susceptibility of humanity to temptation, and the zero-point of the fall of humanity, were thus included in the divine decree. God willed that the object of this election should be

God and not humanity. God removed from humanity and took upon God the burden of the evil that unavoidably threatened and actually achieved and exercised dominion in the world that God had ordained as the theater of the glory of God. God removed from humanity and took upon God the suffering that resulted from this dominion, including the condemnation of sinful humanity. For this reason, we cannot ascribe any autonomy to the world of evil or to the will of God as God directs it towards and assents to it in a permissive form. In Jesus Christ, we can see and know this whole sphere of evil, as something that God has already overcome, something that yields, and something that God has destroyed by the positive will of the overflowing glory of God. God has elected and ordained humanity to bear the image of this glory. That alone is what we see and know in Jesus Christ in relation to humanity. The suffering borne on the cross of Golgotha by humanity in unity with the Son of God, who is as such a sacrifice for the sins of the world, is a stage on the road, an unavoidable point of transition, to the glory of the resurrection, ascension and session. However, the Son of God is not glorified. God who humbled the divine self according to the decree of God had no need of glorifying. God does not experience glorifying, but rather, in the power of the deity of God, God realizes and accomplishes it. It is evident that by an act of renunciation God diverts to humanity the portion that rightly belongs to God. The glory, goodness, and blessedness that we find in the sphere of creation no longer belong to God. God has given away what belongs to God. God has given away the divine self and all the prerogatives of the Godhead. God has given them to the man, Jesus, and in Christ to the creature. There can be no doubt that in the overflowing of the glory of God is sacrificial love. Love seeks not its own, but the things of others. This corresponds to the humiliation that the Son of God accepted on behalf of the lost humanity, and to the whole exaltation conferred upon humanity by this

divine favor. The thought of the predestination of God can awaken only joy. It is a way willed by God. At the end of this way, the glory of God is revealed in the fact that God removed the threat and became our salvation. In the light of the end, there is no place for anything but joy. Only the end affects us, only grace. For this reason, in relation to the divine predestination we must look always to that end. This is not a matter of optimism. It is a matter of being obedient and not disobedient, of being thankful and not self-willed. In obedience and thankfulness, we can only rejoice at the double predestination of God.

Fourth, because it is identical with the election of Jesus Christ, the eternal will of God is a divine activity in the form of the history encounter and decision between God and humanity. The eternal will of God that is the predestination of all things is the life of God in the form of the history, encounter, and decision between God and humanity. This history, encounter, and decision God already willed and knew from all eternity, and to that extent prior to all external events, are already actual before God and for God. When we look at the content of the divine predestination, at once we can say that the divine life, which God actively expressed in this predestination from the very beginning, is the life of the love of God. The fact that the love of God was there at the very beginning of all things, as the purpose and power of this overflowing of the inward being of God as the living God, is not in any way limited or questioned but rather confirmed by the truth that the divine predestinating is done in freedom. There is a single but comprehensive autonomy of the creature that is constituted originally by the act of eternal divine election and which has in this act its ultimate reality. We cannot over-emphasize the freedom of God and sovereignty in this act. We cannot assert too strongly that in the election of grace it is a matter of the decision and initiative of the precedence over the One who is elected. We can hardly go too far or say too much along these lines, more particularly

when we remember between God and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Who has the initiative in this relationship? Who has the precedence? Who decides? Who rules? God. God founds and maintains the union between God and humanity. God awakens humanity to existence before God and summons humanity to the service of God. God in the Son is the person of human beings. All that humanity can and will do is to pray, to follow, and to obey. The motive for this establishment of the kingdom is not in an autocratic self-seeking, but a love that directs itself outwards, a self-giving to the creature. It is still true that God wills to be God even in the relationship God has with the reality distinct from God. It is still true that in this will, the glory of God ordains for itself this overflowing as the predestination of all things. The goodness of the will of God and work depends upon the fact that in the smallest things as in the greatest, God wills, fulfills, and reveals who God is. However, God wills, fulfills, and reveals recognizing the distinct reality of the creature, granting, and conceding to it an individual and autonomous place side by side with God.

It is now possible and necessary for us to make the controversial assertion that predestination is the divine act of will itself and not an abstraction from or fixed and static result of it. I note a further limitation of the traditional Reformed teaching at this point. There can be no doubt that understood in this way the concept could and did help forward the cause of Deism. Deism separated the Creator of the world from the world process. The decree of God is a living decree, a decision that is intuitively more living than any decree of humanity. It is also spirit and life in a way impossible even for the very best of the written laws of humanity as best expounded or applied. As against this tendency, we must remember that predestination, like creation and reconciliation, like vocation, justification, sanctification, and glorification, describes a divine activity, and

that there is no reason why we should suddenly substitute for this concept a concept of isolated and static being. When we speak of the divine predestination, we speak of an eternal happening. In predestination, God does not conceal from us. It takes place in the foundation and existence and guidance of Israel and the church. It takes place in the calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification of humanity. It takes place in our awakening to faith, hope and love. What else are these things but the movement of the eternally electing God, the God who exercises free love in the beginning? This activist understanding of predestination depends upon the identifying of it with the election of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, there is only one reason that we can give for deciding in favor of an activist understanding, and that is that the predestination that we know in the person and work of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly event, the history, encounter, and decision between God and humanity. The election of God and the election of humanity is act. The self-humiliation of God and the exaltation of humanity by God is act. The self-giving as it is effected in the Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, and as it is made manifest in Christ as the eternal divine decree is act. The history of salvation in which we can see and understand predestination itself is act. All these are an act, or they are not what they are. In the course of the debate, it always came back to the same fundamental issue. What is to be made of the concept of the repenting of God, which a biblical theology such as the Calvinist claims to be cannot possibly evade?

34. The Election of the Community

The election of grace, as the election of Jesus Christ, is simultaneously the eternal election of the one community of God the existence of which Jesus Christ is to be attested to the whole world and the whole world summoned to faith in Jesus Christ. This one community of God in its form as Israel has to serve the representation of the divine judgment, in its form as the Church the representation of the divine mercy. In its form as Israel, it is determined for hearing, and in its form as the Church for believing the promise sent forth to humanity. To the one elected community of God is given in the one case its passing, and in the other its coming form.

1. Israel and the Church

The community is the human fellowship that in a particular way provisionally forms the natural and historical environment of the man, Jesus Christ. Its particularity consists in the fact that by its existence it has to witness to Him in face of the whole world, to summon the whole world to faith in Christ. Its provisional character consists in the fact that in virtue of this office and commission it points beyond itself to the fellowship of all people in face of which it is a witness and herald. The community that has to be described in this way forms the inner circle of the other election that has taken place in and with the election of Jesus Christ. In so far as, on the one hand, it forms this special environment of the man, Jesus, the inner circle, but on the other hand, it is itself of the world or chosen described as mediate and mediating in respect of its mission and function. It is mediate, as far as it is the middle point between the election of Jesus Christ and the election of those who have believed, and do and will believe, in Christ. It is mediating as far as the relation between the election of Jesus Christ and that of all believers is mediated and conditioned by it.

Who and what is Jesus Christ in His relation to the community of God? Jesus Christ is the crucified Messiah of Israel. As such, He is the authentic witness of the judgment of humanity that God takes within the divine life by choosing fellowship with humanity. We can see this judgment in the continuing rejection by Jews of their election by God. Jesus Christ is also the risen Lord of the church. As such, He is the authentic witness of the mercy of God toward humanity in which God chooses humanity for fellowship with divinity. The church is the gathering of Jew and Gentile called on the ground of its election as the community of God. It has the responsibility of setting forth to sinful humanity the goodwill, readiness, and honor of God. Thus, the object of election is not Israel or the church, but both together, in their unity. The church is not the church

when it resists the joining of Israel and church into one community of God. Where the church apprehends in the crucified Messiah of Israel its own election, knowing itself to be one with Israel, there we find revealed the unity of the whole elected community. The church is, then, in the second form of this one community of God. The church will comfort Israel with its message. The church will reveal to Israel the evil it intended in the crucifixion of Jesus. The church will make clear that the promises delivered to Israel it will proclaim to the world. The church will actually save Israel from annihilation. The church understands that the Son of God is incarnate in this Jewish people. The distinction of Israel is the gift of the Word and promise of God. Judaism also had to pass into a new covenant in order to fulfill the promises of God to Israel. We have the answer for this in a proper exegesis of Romans 9-11.

What I have just stated is my application of Romans 9:1-5 to the environment of today. We learn in these verses that Paul is in a position to exercise the apostolic office committed to him by Christ only in the name of and on behalf of the church and Israel. His work as an apostle, and necessary to him personally for his salvation, is to approach his mission as to the Jews first. They are his brothers and sisters according to the flesh. The community of the church has its basis in the unbelieving Israel. The church is Israel reaching its divinely appointed goal. The church lives on what Israel has received as a wrestler with God. The church lives by the glory of God that goes before Israel and dwells in its midst, by God's own manifestation of the divine presence graciously occurring, but also graciously concealed, in the providences of its history. Israel experiences the concealing of this gracious presence, while the church lives by that divine presence. Yet, it is one divine presence. In the same way, the church lives by the covenant made between God and Israel. The church lives by the existence of Christ

according to the flesh, and thus a descendant of Abraham and David, and called Jesus of Nazareth. This reality is significant. He is this particular man, within this particular community, as well as the Son of God. He was not a Greek, Roman, or German, but Israelite. As we find in John 4:22, "Salvation is of the Jews." The church recognizes itself in the prophets of Israel that reminded Israel of its disobedience. Yet, in defiance of all Gentile arrogance, the church asserts and teaches the eternal election of Israel.

2. The Judgment and the Mercy of God

In the eternal election of the one man, Jesus of Nazareth, God becomes the covenant-partner of a sinful humanity that has fallen away from God, falling victim to death according to just divine judgment. The purpose of the election of this one man is the will of God to save lost humanity and to make humanity a participant of the glory of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Christ does this by taking the place of humanity in the person of this one man, by taking into the divine life human misery, by making human misery a divine concern, and by clothing humanity with divine righteousness, blessedness, and power. The election of this one man is divine election for the execution of the judgment and mercy of God. This divine intervention for lost humanity, the execution of divine judgment and mercy, is effective and visible among humanity. The church experiences its election to serve the self-presentation of Jesus Christ and the act of God that took place in Christ, as a testimony and summons to the whole world. The whole community of God, Israel and church, is elected for this as surely as Jesus Christ elects it. The specific service for which Israel is determined within the whole of the elected community is to reflect the judgment from which God has rescued humanity and which God wills to endure in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The church needs this contribution. It cannot voice its witness to Jesus Christ and its summons to faith in Christ

without at the same time expressing this testimony that peculiarly belongs to Israel. Indeed, there can be no witness born to Jesus Christ without a confession of the divine saving passion, and therefore without a confession of the human misery that in divine passion God has taken within divine life and taken away. However, the church knows of humanity's misery only as far as Israel too lives in it, as a reflection of the divine judgment. The Israelite form of God's community reveals what God elects for fellowship with God within in the divine eternal election of grace. God elects fellowship with humanity. Note, however, that God chooses a disobedient people. Note the twofold burden that God chooses for the divine life when God elects to make fellowship with humanity radically true by becoming a human being in the person of the Son of David, Jesus. God elects the people of Israel with the purpose of assuming its flesh and blood. What is really meant by the humanity of the whole elected community of God, what it costs God to make divinity one with it, to be its God, emerges in its Israelite form. The price that God pays for this great divine love is no less than to make divinity a curse. The aim of God is that Israel should become obedient to its election, that it should enter the church and perform this special office in the church, in order that in this way the differentiation within the community should confirm its unity. However, God does not wait until Israel is obedient before employing it to divine service. God settles this with its election. Israel cannot avoid the divine purpose, whether it becomes obedient or disobedient. God does not make the purpose God has with Israel dependent on the attitude of Israel to that election. The situation is rather that Israel's attitude is itself dependent on the purpose of God with it. Whatever its attitude, it necessarily takes place in the course of the fulfillment of the service assigned to and required of Israel in and with its election. If Israel were to be obedient to its election, this attitude would at once

mean that its special witness about the judgment of God would become the undertone to the church's witness about the mercy of God. Thus, sustained, covered and softened by the voice of the church, God would take it up into the praise of the elected community. As this stand, however, Israel is disobedient to its election. It resists its election at the very moment when the promise given with it passes into fulfillment. Israel refuses to join in the confession of the church, refuses to enter upon its service in the one elected community of God. Israel forms and upholds the Synagogue. It acts as if it had still another special determination and future beside the church. It acts as if it could realize its true determination beside the church. In so doing, it creates schism, a gulf, in the midst of the community of God. However, the unbelief of Israel cannot alter the fact that objectively it is the people of its arrived and crucified Messiah, and therefore the people of the secret Lord of the church. Over against the witness of the church, it can set forth only the sheer, stark judgment of God, the obduracy and consequent misery of humanity, the sentence and punishment that God has chosen to undergo in Christ to prevent them from falling. Israel punishes itself for its sectarian self-assertion. However, it cannot alter the fact that even in this way, it discharges exactly the service for which God has elected it. How it is with humanity, the nature of the burden that God in divine love assumes, the nature of the curse that God has made within the divine life through Christ and for the good of humanity, Israel reveals even in its unbelief. The existence of the Jews is an adequate proof of the existence of God. It adequately demonstrates the depths of human guilt, need, and therefore of the inconceivable greatness of the love of God in the event in which God was in Christ reconciling the world to God. By their resistance to their election, they cannot create any fact that finally turns the whole scale against their election, separating them from the love of God in Jesus Christ, canceling the eternal

decree of God. The service for which the church as the perfect form of the one elected community is determined, whether Israel obeys its election or not, consists in the fact that it is the reflection of the mercy in which God turns divine glory to humanity. God chooses for humanity the wholeness of divine love. God chooses, out of the treasures of the divine nature righteousness and holiness, peace and joy, life and blessedness. God chooses for humanity to be the family member of all and the leader of all, to be servant and master, to be physician and king. God chooses for humanity the reflection of divine glory. God does this by electing flesh and blood from Judah-Israel to the divine tabernacle and the church of Jews and Gentiles to be the divine sanctuary, to declare to the world the gracious turning of God to humanity. All this happens entirely for our benefit. All this we infer from the nature and will of the electing God. It reveals that the primal, basic decision of God with regard to humanity is divine mercy, the engagement of the divine heart, and therefore the most intimate, intensive involvement in the human condition. It reveals that divine mercy sustains and surrounds the judgment of God, even divine severity by divine kindness, even wrath by divine love. The election of Israel, then, is not only negatively confirmed by the fact that Israel has to fulfill its determination and to serve as a reflection of the divine judgment, but positively, by the fact that from the very first the church pre-exists in its midst. With the election of Israel in view, God has acted among human beings from the beginning of the world in the form of election. Based on the election of Israel, God proceeds to elect people from its midst for special appointment, mission, and representative function, as exponents and instruments of the mercy in which God has made this people the people of God. Their existence does not alter the determination of Israel. Rather, it sets in relieve what Israel has to reveal in reflection of the divine judgment. It sets in relieve the misery of

humanity, not as it is left to take its course, but as God takes it to heart, considering and limiting it from all eternity. It does not set in relieve the wrath of God raging for its own sake, but the fire of divine love that consumes, and yet does not destroy, but rather purifies and saves. Strictly speaking, the pre-existent life of the church in Israel consists in the light that is provisionally cast on the history of Israel by this one man, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the future of Israel and its goal, making visible within this history certain individual, fragmentary, contradictory and transitory pre-figurations of the form of the community that God will reveal in and with the appearance, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church as the perfect form of the elected community has the universal, uncontradicted and constant determination to praise God's mercy, will not refuse to recognize itself in the prototype, prevision, and prophecy of the elect in and from Israel, and therefore to see its interrelationship with them. More than that, it will acknowledge that it establishes the election of Israel. It regards itself as united and bound to all Israel.

What I have just written interprets Romans 9:6-29, Galatians 4:21-31, and Romans 4: 9-25. These passages remind us that from the first, God has chosen, differentiated, and divided in Israel. God has separated church and Israel, and Israel and church. In so doing, God has confirmed the election of Israel. This separation consists in the good will of God, not good works. Note that God does not forsake even the rejected. We see this Ishmael in Genesis 21:17ff and Esau in Genesis 36. Since God has already shown mercy, God will show it again. The righteousness of God consists in again becoming the merciful One. God renews, establishes, and glorifies this covenant with humanity because of mercy. The friend of God and the enemy of God serve the divine purpose, as the example of Moses and Pharaoh demonstrates. Israel becomes a vessel of dishonor to God. Yet, it serves the divine purpose. There are "vessels of wrath"

throughout the history of Israel. The reveal the divine No, veiled within the divine Yes. Paul says that at the goal of the history of Israel, God will not say No to humanity. Rather, veiled under the No, God will say Yes. God will not leave Jesus in the grace after being put to death, but will raise Christ from the dead. Israel is a constant reminder from what sort of “lump” from the church has arisen. The sentence of God upon Israel is not a final word, not the entire Word of God, but only the foreword to the promise of God of the divine glory that God will reveal later. Israel is not only the pre-figuration of the synagogue prepared for destruction, but is also the pre-figuration of the church prepared for the vision and witness of the glory of God, for the praise of divine mercy. The miracle of the church consists primarily in that many Gentiles God calls to the same faith in the God of Israel, and that they come to faith from all over the world. The sanctification of Israel meant separation from the rest of the world. God showed grace by preserving it in the midst of the nations. That God loved Israel always seemed to mean that God did not love the nations as much or in the same way.

3. The Promise of God Heard and Believed

The election of Israel by God finds its confirmation in the election of the church. The reason for this is that the mission of Israel finds its fulfillment in the church.

In the eternal election of the one man, Jesus of Nazareth, God makes a witness to the covenant that God has decided to establish between God and humanity, to the judgment and mercy in which God has turned toward humanity. The purpose of the election is that through this one man, humanity should come to hear the divine self-witness as the promise, pledge and assurance that is valid for human life too, accepting its truth and actuality human life, relying on it, and living by the fact that its truth is to this individual human being. The elected community of God, as the environment of the

elected man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the place where the honor of God dwells. God elects the community in relation to the world in order to serve the divine promise that awaits the hearing and faith of humanity. The whole community, as Israel and church, God elects in this way and appoints to this service. Wherever it lives, it always lives in the service of the divine self-witness that God permits humanity to hear and to which God calls humanity to believe. The special service of Israel within the totality of the elected community consists in the hearing, the reception and the acceptance of the divine promise. Israel is the community of God as far as the Word of the grace of God reaches it. Let us suppose that Israel becomes obedient to its election by rising to life in the church. Its special contribution to the fulfillment of the mission of the community within the totality will be repeatedly to make room for pure readiness to accept the Word spoken by God, for humble attention to the fact that God speaks this Word to humanity, and for close attention to what God says to human beings. We can distinguish all this from what humanity says to itself. The church needs this contribution. A church that becomes anti-Semitic or a-Semitic suffers the loss of its faith by losing the object of it. The church has every reason to see that nothing interrupts the special service of Israel in the community. The Israelite form of the community of God reveals that when in the eternal election of grace God elects fellowship with humanity, God has assumed in relation to humanity the indestructible position of Leader, Disposer, and Giver. God makes those whom God elects free, wise, and rich by electing them. God chooses to make humanity hear the divine Word. This is what God elects when God elects to be a human being in the person of the Son of Abraham, electing the people of Israel in order to acknowledge its flesh and blood as belonging to God. In the Israelite form, the humanity of the community of God finds its revelation. Humanity can only follow God, but it has the privilege of following

God. Human beings can only be subject to God, but they have the privilege of being subject to God. Above all, they can only listen to God, but they have the privilege of listening. The content of the promise is by the established by the formal fact that there is no reversal or even dissolution of the relationship between the One from whom it comes and the one to whom God addresses it. We can see this truth in Israel's crucified Messiah, who has appeared not in the form of a king, but of a servant. This is what the elected community of God has now also to attest in divine service. The community that hears God, in virtue of the fact that it is the community of Israel's Messiah, and has accordingly an Israelite form as well, and that even in its church form it is Israel that reaches its determined goal may live on. God does not wait for Israel's faith before claiming it for this service. Israel is a hearer of the promise. As such, it bears witness to Jesus Christ, to His divine election, to its own election, but also to that of the election of the church. If it were to believe and obey its election, this would mean that the church could hear properly and perfectly that God says to it. Without encroaching on the church, it could then truly be Israel in the church. It would then be precisely Israel in the church, which by its special contribution would see to it that the church remains the church. As things are, however, Israel is not obedient to its election. It thinks that it can put itself into the right relationship to God. Through sheer zealous activity, it fails to hear and do the one thing it would have to do if it heard willingly. It thus places itself in a vacuum. It besmirches its honor at the very moment when, if only it would believe, it would at last shine out. It jeopardizes by its failure the existence of the one community of God that cannot do without it. Even in this rigidity, it is the people of Jesus Christ. The electing God and the elected community embrace even the Israel that steps into the void. It must carry out the service God assigns to it, even when it has fallen prey to this rigidity. Over

against the believing witness of the church, it can now only represent how things are with hearing humanity. It shows the infertile path, the stones, thistles, and thorns of the field on which the seed of the Word falls. It shows the beginning, without continuation, the present, without the future, the question, without the answer. It shows the missed opportunity. It brings punishment upon itself. This disobedience of Israel cannot alter in the very least the divine promise itself. Israel suffers under this disobedience. The promise, however, suffers no harm at all, when Israel only hears it, but does not believe it. Even with regard to stubborn Israel, the promise remains what it is, the self-witness of God to which humanity can, to its hurt, refuse faith, but which humanity cannot change into a message of woe. It cannot resign from the community of God. It can do nothing to prevent the sound of its voice reaching the ears of the world, and even its own ears, in the believing witness of the church. It can resist the gracious favor of God. However, it cannot turn it into disfavor, neither in principle nor in practice, neither in itself, nor with respect to the service it owes the gracious favor of God, nor indeed with respect to the fact that God directs this grace to itself. It cannot infringe on God so deeply that God ceases to be God, or even be Israel's God. Faith means putting one's confidence in the mercy of God as God attests it to humanity, both Jew and Gentile, in the promise of God. Israel lives when it accomplishes this step, when its hearing rises to live as faith, when it rises to life in the church as its crucified Messiah rises to life in His resurrection as the Lord of the church. The church form of the community of God reveals that when God, through the election of grace, elects humanity for community with God, God promotes humanity to the indestructible position of a child of God and family member, an intimate friend. The church is the perfect form of the community to the extent that it reveals its unity and mission. As the church, the community is the center and medium of

communication between Jesus and the world, having its commission to all who still stand outside. For in faith, Jesus wills His own people to accept Him. However, this brings us right up against the pre-existent church in Israel. God has already had children of God and family members and intimate friends in Israel. The history of the special mercy of God towards Israel is the history of the faith that could encounter this mercy. In this special history occurring in and from it, Israel, too, is a believing witness and a participator in the perfect form of the community, a participator in its function and mission with respect to the world. The church of faith in the promises of God, as it pre-exists in Israel and ultimately arises from it, is the positive confirmation of its election. The church reveals the teleology of Israel. The promise wills for people to hear in order for people to believe it. In this sense, in the directing of the obedience required of Israel towards the goal of faith, we must maintain the contribution of Israel to the work of the elected community. The reality of the pre-existent church in Israel consists in the repeated occurrence in Israel's history of that hearing of the Word of God that one can understand only as faith, only as a prevision and prophecy of the proper and exact hearing of the church, or not at all.

What I have just said is nothing other than an exposition, primarily, of Romans 9:30-10:21. What is the point at issue in these verses? Righteousness, defined as the merciful will of God fulfilled in the appearance of the Messiah, in His death and resurrection, so that faith in Him becomes palpable for every human being, that everyone can live by and with Him. This is what we have to say about the history of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, viewing it in retrospect. In this way, they also became genuine heirs and bearers of the promise. This is what is to be said today about the existence of the church. Israel pursued the law of righteousness. However, it came short of the righteousness of

God, breaking the Law, desecrating the temple, destroying the purity of the land, and denying its tradition. The Law finds its fulfillment in faith. However, Israel lacked this faith. It had the works appropriate to its mission and endowment. It lacked the relevant relationship to the meaning and goal of its special mission and endowment. What it lacked was that it did not want to rely on the promise, on the mercy of God, but on itself, on its own willing and running in the direction of the promised fulfillment.

4. The Passing and the Coming Humanity

In the eternal election of the one man, Jesus of Nazareth, God, merciful in divine judgment, appoints for humanity a gracious end and a new, gracious beginning. The purpose of the election of this One is the righteous and saving will of God to deal with the human need at its root and to show humanity supreme favor by taking the place of human beings in the person of this One. This allowed God to take away from individuals in order to take upon divinity the bitterness of human end, and bring upon humanity the whole joy of the new beginning. The elected community of God as the environment of the elected man, Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore as the place where the honor of God dwells, must correspond to this twofold determination of its Head by existing itself also in a twofold form, in a passing and a coming form, in a form of death and a form of life. The specific service that Israel has within the community of God is the passing of the old humanity. Its special contribution to the work of the community of God consists in the critical reminder that those who resist God are in the process of passing away. The church needs this contribution. Its witness to Jesus Christ and to the living future promised in Christ to humanity one cannot hear without the background and undertone of the message of Israel, whose Messiah is the crucified. The community of God in its Israelite form discloses what God elects for fellowship with God when, in the eternal election of grace,

God elects fellowship with humanity. God chooses what is not worthy of God, the frailty of the flesh, suffering, dying, death, in order to take it away from humanity and clothe humanity in glory. Matching the depth of the need of this people is the depth to which God does not count it too costly to condescend for the sake of the divine covenant with humanity. That Israel should come to faith and into the church, and that in the church it should perform this special service, is the purpose of God for it, the promise given to it with its election. Israel, the smitten servant of God, is dependent on God's attitude toward it, but God is not dependent on that of the servant to God. In one way or another, the latter will have to carry out the will of God, and thus reveal the depth of human need and therefore the depth of the divine mercy. If Israel were obedient to its election, its special witness to the passing of the old humanity, taken up into the confession by the whole community of the coming kingdom of God, would supplement and harmonize with the witness of hope founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church could speak with richer content. Now, the coming of the new humanity has indeed taken place already in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Israel's Messiah, the promised Son of Abraham. In Him, Israel has already become new. God has already translated it from death to life. God has already made present its hope. God has already appointed its position and task in the church. What does not happen, however, is that Israel takes up this position, thus actualizing the fact that old things have passed away, and all things become new. It refuses to accept the sentence of death under which it has placed itself through the betrayal of its Messiah to the Gentiles and under which it might now stand to its salvation, seeing Christ died for its sins too. It wants to look steadily backwards instead of forwards. This attempt is doomed to failure even as it is undertaken. Old things have passed away. All things become new. Thus, we do not seek the result of Jewish unbelief

outside, but only within the results of the divine mercy. Thus, Israel's perverse choice means no more than that where it might have served voluntarily it is now compelled to discharge its service in its perversity, in the execution of this impotent attempt. It must now live among the nations the pattern of a historical life that has no future. It does not have its appointed time, like other nations, for it has merged into others. It punishes itself in this way. It disrupts the community of God. This also applies to the promise given to Israel with its election, in that its God kills only to make alive. Human beings cannot remove the promise of God that confronts typically carnal being as such. Rabbinic orthodoxy, liberalism, and indifferentism, cannot succeed in rejecting family membership with Jesus Christ. Such individuals God has marked for death, but also for life. The existence of Israel is the fulfillment of Israel's determined purpose with which Israel must always reckon. It could live to its salvation if it would live in the church to render that auxiliary service, if it would believe in its Messiah. The church form of the community reveals the scope of what God wills for humanity when in the eternal election of grace God elects human beings for fellowship with God. In electing human beings from all eternity, God elects humanity for eternity. In electing such persons in grace, God elects such persons for salvation. In electing such persons for fellowship with God, God becomes the Guarantor and Giver of the eternal salvation offered to such persons. Without ceasing to be God, and without human beings ceasing to be human beings, God invests humanity with divine glory. Election reveals that life surrounds death, and the kingdom of the beloved Son surrounds hell, with all its terrible reality. The risen Lord of the church attests all this. One cannot penetrate behind this revelation. One can no longer ignore this revelation. To attest this truth is the task of the church. In presence of death, it confesses life. In the presence of old humanity that passes away it confesses the coming

humanity. The church is aware of death, but of death robbed of its power, subordinated to live, and made to serve it. The church of the gospel is the final determination of Israel. As far as this pre-history too finds itself enacted within the history of Israel, Israel participates with the church in the perfect form of the community, in the body of Christ, and it too has this universal mission. By the church of the coming humanity, pre-existing in Israel, we find the positive confirmation of Israel's election. It does not alter Israel's special determination, but illumines and interprets it. It shows that God's fatherly disposition to this people is the prime and ultimate meaning of its history. There can be nothing more than a pre-figuration in the case of the pre-existent church in Israel. Jews and Gentiles together, called by the risen Christ, reveal its reality, and receive the consolation and blessing of the Gospel. In the church founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, one cannot possibly overlook this problem. Israel does not itself believe the Gospel if it does not recognize its faith in that of the preserved and redeemed in Israel; if it does not see that the very hope that sustained them is its own. In so doing, the church will welcome the positive confirmation of the election of all Israel, and it cannot refuse for its part to make the hope for all Israel its most intimate concern. In grateful recognition of the ties and obligations binding it to Israel, the church will be glad to have in its midst Christians from the Jews also. It will desire to be no more than Israel fulfilling its determined purpose, to live by nothing else but the grace of God directed towards Israel. Though waiting for Israel's conversion, it willingly precedes Israel with the confession of the unity of the community of God, the unity of the humanity who both passes and comes in the person of Christ, who has suffered death for all and brought life to light for all.

What I have said is nothing more than an interpretation of Romans 11. God has stretched out the divine hands to the same disobedient people. In the sphere of the thinking of Paul, the idea is quite an impossible one. God could not abandon the attempt. The faithfulness would then, in the end, serve no purpose and at some fail to reach its end. The question Paul faces is that of Christian anti-Semitism, whether the crucifixion of Jesus Christ does not settle the fact that one can now treat the Jews as the people accursed by God. Is not the Jewish origin of the apostles and the church an irrelevancy? The Gentile Christians must consider that the very thing that they have against the unbelieving Jews, their attitude to Jesus repeated in their attitude to Paul and the Christian church, in a most remarkable fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2-4, 25:6, Jeremiah 3:17, Zechariah 2:11, 8:20-21, has become the presupposition of their salvation. If the Jews had not delivered up Jesus, He would not have become the Savior of the Gentiles. If the Jews had not repulsed Paul, he would not have become the apostle of the Gentiles. God needed the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles. God needed their transgression. In order to bring about this transgression, God hardened them. Thus, their hardening has become an integral part of salvation-history in a way that is decisive for the Gentiles. The meaning is that by the coming of salvation to the Gentiles, God will show to Israel what God intends for it and what still awaits it, although for the moment it has foolishly trifled away its share in it. Israel is to recognize in the Savior of the world the Messiah who had as such been concealed from it. The decisive result is as follows. Regardless of the hardening of the rest of Israel, regardless of the transgression of Israel, Israel is still the possession and work of God, and as such, the presupposition without which the church would not exist and without which Gentile Christians would not exist. By the coming of salvation to the Gentiles through the transgression of the Jews, by the founding of the church as the

church of Jews and Gentiles, God assigns a quite definite function to these Gentiles in the church. The execution of this function by its very nature makes it impossible for them to regard and treat the unbelieving Jews as forsaken by God.

35. The Election of the Individual

God as such rejects the human being who is isolated over against God. However, to be this human being can only be by the choice of the godless human being. The witness of the community of God to every individual person consists in this. This choice of the godless human being is void. This person belongs eternally to Jesus Christ and therefore is not rejected, but rather elected by God in Jesus Christ. The rejection that this person deserves because of his or her perverse choice is borne and cancelled by Jesus Christ. This person has an appointment to eternal life with God based on the righteous, divine decision. The promise of this person's election determines that as a member of the community, he or she shall bear witness to the whole world. Further, the revelation of this persons' rejection can only determine him or her to believe in Jesus Christ as the One by whom it has been borne and cancelled.

1. Jesus Christ, the Promise and its Recipient

In the matter before us, Barth again admits that he departs from Reformed tradition. The problem of the divine election is not exhausted in the problem of the election of individual human beings. On the contrary, the former embraces the latter. The latter can be appraised only in its connection with the former. However, its connection with the former consists in its relation to the problem of the election of Jesus Christ and with this the election of Israel and the Church. The real problem of election includes the problem that was of such pressing and exclusive importance for the traditional doctrine. It is concerned with the free decision of the love of God for the covenant of God with humanity, apart from which God does not will to be God. For the revelation of the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit, and therefore the revelation of the profundity of the Godhead, is identical with the revelation of the covenant, the revelation in Jesus Christ. It is a matter of the eternal self-giving of God in Jesus Christ and of its attestation by the community of God, which as Israel must represent and proclaim the abasement of God to humanity and as the Church human exaltation to God. As Israel, the matter concerns the

condemnation by God of sin and as the Church the acceptance by God of the faith of humanity. As Israel, the matter concerns the promise and as the Church the fulfillment of the covenant of grace, and therefore the justification and salvation of this whole people. Since this self-giving of God in Jesus Christ constitutes the content of the decree of God, we may discern in it the eternal double predestination, the divine election of grace. That which has been eternally determined in Jesus Christ is concretely determined for every individual person. In the form of the witness of Israel and of the Church, it is also addressed to the person, applies to the person, and comes to the person. This occurs to the extent that in the Word of God the electing God enters with the person into the relationship of Elector to elected, and by the Word makes the person an elected person. The doctrine of predestination must necessarily speak of this predestined person. The election of Jesus Christ relativizes the election of individuals, but it also establishes their election alongside and part from God. As Christ lives who comes forth from Israel and from whom the Church comes forth, there live with Christ and in Christ those whom the community calls, and to whom it may commit its call. It is in their election alone that election can really be visible and effective for the community. This fellowship does not lead any independent life in relation to its members. It lives in them.

We might also note secular versions of election, such as in Nazi and Communist theories.

However, the term “individual human being,” which we have provisionally used, is ambiguous in this context. We must now clarify it by a definition of those who, in and through the community, are the object of divine predestination. People have an individuality in relation to the human group: the family, the nation, the state, society, the total complex of human nature and history. The event that stands under the sign of divine

predestination does not take place between God and one of these groups, but between God and individual human beings. The sing itself already refers to them. This election has been made in Jesus Christ. The community is its necessary medium. However, its object is individual human beings. Certainly, these individuals in their group relationships, in the callings, obligations, duties, restrictions, and potentialities, which are given in such relationships. However, individuals are actively responsible in these relationships, and not the groups themselves or any single group. There are no predestined families and no predestined nations, nor predestined humanity. There are only predestined individuals, predestined in Jesus Christ and by way of the community. It is individuals who are chosen and not the totality of humanity. God seeks, calls, blesses, and sanctifies the many, the totality, the natural and historical groups, and humanity itself, in and through the individual. Predestined humanity is not met by honor and approval, but by justification by grace alone, by forgiveness. Such humanity is not the object of divine election in virtue of a life that is acceptable and welcome to God, but because God covers, transforms, and renews his or her unworthy and rebellious life. Such humanity the sovereign God encounters, not with a natural Therefore, but with a miraculous Nevertheless. Such humanity God chooses for the sake of the will of God. Such humanity God makes a partner of the covenant of God quite apart from and contrary to his or her own merit or ability. Predestined humanity is humanity made usable to God by the Holy Spirit.

We have described the election of the individual more precisely as the election in Jesus Christ of the godless human being who is shown to be elect in the fact that as a hearing and believing recipient of the promise of the election of the person, the person may live the life of the elect. Barth admits he has traveled far from the classical

Reformed doctrine of predestination. We have interpreted the concept of the divine decree by the main articles of Christology: The unity and difference of the divine and human nature, the humiliation and the exaltation, the prophetic, high-priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. We have understood Jesus Christ as the one Elector and Elect, and again as the one Rejector and Rejected. We have understood predestination as the election of the community to be the witness of this determination and non-determination of the many decided in the election of Jesus Christ. These are the propositions by which Barth says he departs from Reformed tradition.

2. The Elect and the Rejected

To the distinction, peculiar to the elect, of the relationship of God to them and their relationship to God, there corresponds objectively their difference from other people. This difference is their calling. However, their calling, the work of the Holy Spirit is that by means of the community the election of Jesus Christ may be proclaimed to them as their own election, and that they may be assured of their election by faith in Jesus Christ, in whom it was brought about. It is from this solidarity of the elect and the rejected in the One Jesus Christ that there arises a very definite recollection for the elect and an equally definite expectation for others. The recollection for this elect is this. The distinction of the relationship of God to them, and of their relationship to God, is originally and properly the distinction of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Son and Friend of God. It is with Christ that God is well pleased because God recognizes the countenance of God in Christ. Christ is the secret of God, which is the basis of the fact that there is such a distinction for others also. Apart from Christ, the elect cannot be elect, but they and all people are inevitably rejected. Prophecy and announcement is the form the witness to Christ takes in the Old Testament.

3. The Determination of the Elect

The election of a person takes place with a very definite purpose. What is this determination of the elect? To what is the person elected? We must now consider this question further.

The comprehensive and decisive answer is that an elect person is elect in, with, by, and for Jesus Christ. To this determination from Christ and to Christ everything that one might otherwise regard as his or her natural and historical determination is subject. In Christ, persons are who they are, and will be who they will be. Their fulfillment and their limitation are in Christ. The Yes and No of their lives are eternally spoken in Christ. Who they are or may be in Christ, by their individuality or personality as given them by God, is revealed in the fact that the Holy Spirit in accordance with their election calls them.

The particular meaning and order of their being are based upon and will also be actualized and revealed in the fact that that Jesus Christ is for them. As Jesus Christ is for them, the goal and content of their own lives are foreordained. The purpose for which God chose them is to be the kind of person for whom Jesus Christ is. Every election of individuals is an election in the sphere of the community. We reach back to the basis of the true doctrine of predestination if we begin with the statement that the determination of the elect consists in the fact that people allow themselves to be loved by God. They live as those whom from all eternity God, incomprehensible and unmerited goodness, will not renounce. This is indeed the determination of Jesus Christ, in our flesh, to be the One loved of God from and to all eternity. This is the determination of Israel and of the Church. They are the people and congregation of those who are loved by God in Jesus Christ. Obviously, no person can be anything other or better than this, one whom God loves. This is what God wills with human beings, to love human beings. This is what God wills from human beings, to allow human beings to have God love them. It is for this

purpose that God elects human beings. God shall live as a partner in the covenant that God willed and established, of which God is the Lord and Guarantor, the continuance of the omnipotent faithfulness of God ensures it. Whatever else this may signify, it signifies love. It signifies severe, wrathful, burning love, but love. Love is eternal, not bounded by the limitations of creatureliness, forgiving human sin, giving the creature a share in the glory of the Creator. This participation, provided and executed in free grace, as present promise and hoped for fulfillment, in the goal and content, the expression and fullness, is the meaning and order of the existence of the elect. This participation is the one thing that human beings need, but which also does fully satisfy human beings. Humanity cannot be or become anything greater. People cannot become anything other than the one who God loves, loved in the Son who bears the nature even of human flesh, loved as a member of the body of Christ, in the fellowship of the many who also have it as their determination to be loved by God in Christ. The determination of the elect to be the object of the love of God is undoubtedly human determination to blessedness. The glory of God, to share in which is the intention and purpose of the love of God for the creature, is the overflowing of the inner perfection and joy of God. God chooses the elect from eternity and for eternity, that human beings may catch up a beam or a drop of the blessedness of God and live as its possessor, so that human beings may rejoice in God and with God. It is for blessedness that God has determined human beings, as God determines who God is in the Son for unity with humanity, as in Christ, God offered up no less than God did. God has determined humanity for blessedness. In and with the election of Jesus Christ God chose Israel and the Church as the people and congregation of those who are grateful to Christ for the self-offering of God. Because of this self-offering, humanity may love and praise God as those to whom the ascribed and promised salvation has come. God blesses each

elect individual, whether or not he or she recognizes and enjoys and answers it as is fitting. Human beings cannot and will not lack anything. As the elect of God, human beings have nothing to bring except their thanks.

What do gratitude, and therefore blessedness, and therefore being loved by God mean? Clearly, participation in the life of God in a human existence and action in which there is a representation and illustration of the glory of God and its work. There can be no question of anything more. Gratitude is the response to a kindness that one cannot repeat or return. One can only recognize and confirm an answer that corresponds to it and reflects it. Gratitude is the establishment of this correspondence. The gratitude of the elect for the grace of God cannot be anything more than the establishment of this correspondence. The elect are those who stand in the service and commission of the gracious God. Because of their election, God summoned them by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Each elect individual is as such a messenger of God. This is their service and commission. It is for this purpose that they may represent and portray the glory of the grace of God. It is in this that they may be grateful and blessed. God sends them. They are apostles. The reason for this is the election of Jesus Christ to be an apostle of grace. Its context is the apostolate of grace that is the meaning and order of the life of the whole community of God. The determination of the elect is to allow the light that has kindled within them to shine. The determination of the elect is to pass on the good news of the love of God for humanity that they have received. The determination of the elect is to make the calling, in which God has given them a share, their own concern in respect of all others. It is not within the power of the elect to elect others, or to call others. They have not called or elected themselves. However, it certainly is within their power to be a

faithful, joyful, and earnest witness to the election and calling of these others. It is a modest task. They do not need to inquire as to the worthiness or unworthiness of the recipient of their message. While they are responsible for delivering it, they are not responsible for its success. Finally, the determination of the elect consists in the fact that in and with their election and calling, in and with the service for which they are intended and which they have to perform, the ongoing of the reconciling work of the living God in the world is included and takes place. The election of each individual involves an opening up and enlargement of the closed circle of the election of Jesus Christ and His community in relation to the world, or an invasion of the dark kingdom of the lies that rule in the world, a retreat and shrinkage of its godless self-glorification. The existence of each elect means a hidden but real crossing of frontiers, to the gain of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of grace. It is the concern of God that there should be these frontier-crossings. It is also the concern of God how and when they should take place.

To what does God elect individuals? The New Testament answers this question with its portrayal of the existence of the apostles: their calling, appointment and mission. It is in them, in their being and their deeds, that the Church can and should recognize itself as the assembly of the elect for all time. It is in them that each individual member of the Church can and should recognize the meaning and purpose of their own election.

What is their determination? According to the New Testament, it is simply the transmission of the assurance and promise that have come upon themselves. The determination of elect is therefore the attestation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ in the sphere of the world. The world consists of people who have not yet heard the name of Christ, who have not yet come to believe in Christ, who have not yet been benefited by the work that as the prophet, priest, and king of God, all of which Christ performed for

them as well. The people of the world stand under the lordship of Christ but have not yet recognized and confessed Christ as Lord, or given thanks to Christ as Lord. The determination of the apostles is to go into this world with the task of baptizing it. Through the apostles, this is the determination of the Church, and in the Church, it is the determination of all its members, of the elect. If God elects an individual, it is that he or she may be a witness to Jesus Christ, and therefore a proclaimer of the glory of God.

4. The Determination of the Rejected

Rejected individuals are those who isolate themselves from God by resisting their election as it has taken place in Jesus Christ. God is for them. They are against God. God is gracious to them. They are ungrateful to God. God receives them. They withdraw from God. God forgives them their sins. They repeat them as though God had not forgiven them. God releases them from the guilt and punishment of their defection. However, they go on living as the prisoner of Satan. God determines them for blessedness and for the service of God. They choose the joylessness of an existence that accords with their own pride and aims at their own honor. Rejected people exist in their own way alongside the elect. We do not fully understand the answer to the question concerning the determination of the elect if we refuse to consider the situation of these others, the rejected. What is the will of God for them? What is the purpose, the goal and content, the planned outworking and fulfillment, the meaning and order of their existence as itself an object of the divine predetermination? The rejection of humanity is the rejection borne eternally and by Jesus Christ in the power of divine self-giving. God rejects the rejection. Because this is so, the rejected human being is other than the elect. Only as such do they share as rejected people in the grace of creation and providence. They also stand in the sphere of the eternal covenant of divine grace. The election and kingdom of Jesus Christ surround

them, and as such the superiority of the love of God confronts them. This love may burn and consume them as rejected people, as is fitting, but even so, it is still to them the almighty, holy and compassionate love of God. This very love debars them from any independent life of their own alongside or apart from the life of the elect. There they stand, people who are hostile to God, ungrateful to God, withdrawing from God, repeating sins already forgiven, and therefore enslaved and cursed. We can take their existence seriously only as God takes it seriously. We do not take it seriously if we understand it other than as a shadow that yields, dissolves, and dissipates. The shadow is itself sinister, threatening, dangerous, and deadly enough. Yet, it is this within the limit set for it by God. It is more important, urgent and serious to see its divinely imposed limit than the horror that is peculiar to it within this limit. This is its divinely imposed limit, and therefore its shadow-quality, that rejected people exist in the person of Jesus Christ only in such a way that Christ assumes them into the being of Christ as the elect and beloved of God. Only in such sort that as they are accepted and received by God, they are transformed, being put to death as the rejected and raised to their proper life as the elect, holy, justified, and blessed. Because Jesus Christ takes their place, He takes from them the right and possibility of their own independent being and He gives them their own being. With Jesus Christ, the rejected can be such only in the past. They cannot be rejected any more. Between them and an independent existence of their own as rejected, there stands the death that Jesus Christ has suffered in their place, and the resurrection by which Jesus Christ has opened up for them their own place as elect. Their distinctive determination is rooted in their distinctive nature. They do not have it apart from or alongside, but with that of the elect. It indicates the meaning and purpose of the determination of the elect. It is the necessary reverse side of this determination, which we

must not overlook or forget. In its ultimate range, it points to the very spot at which the proper and positive determination of the elect begins.

First, in the reality of the existence peculiar to them, it is the determination of the rejected to manifest the recipients of the Gospel whose proclamation is the determination of the elect. The rejected has not simply vanished or been destroyed. Thanks to the divine wisdom and patience, they can take differed forms within the appointed limit. In this capacity, they represent the world and the individual as far as they are in need of the divine election.

Second, in the distinctive character of their existence, the rejected has the determination constantly to manifest that which is denied and overcome by the Gospel. The rejected are the people whose only witness is to themselves and their false choice as those isolated over against God, the people who at the deepest level and in the deepest sense has nothing at all to say. They are the ones who live in a false service as well as in a false liberty. They are the people who are deceived because they deceive themselves.

Third, the rejected have the determination, in the distinctive limitation of their existence, to manifest the purpose of the Gospel. The rejected have no future. As those who will to be their own master, they can only achieve their own destruction. However, the purpose of the divine election of grace is to grant to those who have no future, a future in covenant with God. It is with this in view that the Gospel speaks. It is with this purpose that God turns to humanity, and that God addresses the Word of God to humanity.

Judas Iscariot is the supreme example in the New Testament of the rejected portion of humanity. The savage and sinful handing over of Jesus by Judas, in itself without justification, corresponds objectively to the handing over of Jesus into the hands

of humanity that is the meaning and content of the apostolic ministry, by which the Church on earth is established and maintained. The latter handing over rectifies the mischief done by the former. Jesus is glorified as He was once blasphemed. Yet, the New Testament does not speak only of a wrathful delivery of Jesus. It also speaks of a divine handing over. Everything positive that Christ does for humanity, so that it is a reality for humanity in Christ, and effective by faith in Christ, is rooted and grounded in the fact that Christ first gave Himself for humanity, or as in Romans 8, God handed him over for humanity. This was for us. Paul strongly emphasized this. This handing over is the eternal will of God. It did not happen by chance. It has nothing whatever to do with human tragedy or the like. It had to happen, as the will of God, and not the will of fate. From this position, which Paul so strongly advocates, we will now look back to the observations that we made regarding the other use of handing over. To begin with, it is obvious that no worse fate overtakes the Jews and Gentiles handed over by God in the wrath of God, or those Christians whose delivery to Satan is occasionally mentioned, than that which God caused to the divine self in the handing over of the Son. However, the more profoundly and comprehensively we attempt to formulate the sin and guilt of Judas, the more nearly his will and deed approach what neither he himself willed and did, nor the people of Israel, nor the Gentiles at whose head he finally appears. Rather, the more nearly his will and deed approach what God willed and did in this matter as the divine handing over that here took place. In the divine handing over, we find the humiliation to which God willed to give the divine self, intervening for humanity and against the rule of Satan in the world of humanity, to cleanse them from the sin against Christ of which they are guilty. We now see Judas who, at their head, incurs the guilt. The paradox in the figure of Judas is that, although his action as the executor of the New

Testament is so sinful, yet as such, in all its sinfulness, it is still the action of that executor. The divine and human handing over cannot be distinguished in what Judas did, as in the genuine apostolic tradition, where the human is related to the divine handing over as to its content and subject. In the case of Judas, the apostle who perverted his apostleship and served Satan, the two coincide. As the human handing over takes place, the divine takes place directly, and the divine takes place directly as the human takes place. In Judas, live again all the great rejected of the Old Testament who already had to testify that this elect people are in truth rejected. Israel is elect in and from its rejection. Israel is elect only in the form of the divine promise given to it in the beginning and never taken away. Israel is elect finally only in the person of the One for whose sake this people could and must have its special existence. It declares that Jesus Christ died also for rejected Israel. What the result will be is in the hand of God. If we cannot answer this question, we have still to maintain that even rejected Israel is always in the open and at the same time so very unequally determined situation of the proclamation, and that the question of its future can never be put except in the situation. However, to say this is to say all that we need to say about the general question of the divine will and intention for the rejected, the non-elect. The answer can only be as follows. God wills that they too should hear the Gospel, and with it the promise of their election. God wills that the elect should proclaim this Gospel to them. God wills that they should appropriate and live by the hope that the Gospel gives them. God wills that the rejected should believe, and that as a believer they should become a rejected humanity elected. The rejected as such has no independent existence in the presence of God. God does not determine them merely as rejected. They are determined to hear and say that they are a rejected humanity elected, from their rejection, people in whom Judas lived, but was also slain, as in the case of

Paul. They are rejected who as such are summoned to faith. They are rejected who based on the election of Jesus Christ, and looking to the fact that Christ delivered Himself up for them, believe in their election.

Chapter VIII – The Command of God

36. Ethics as a task of the Doctrine of God

As the doctrine of the command of God, ethics interprets the Law as the form of the Gospel. That is, ethics is the sanctification that comes to humanity through the electing God. Because Jesus Christ is the holy God and sanctified human being in One, ethics has its basis in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Because the God who claims humanity for a relationship with God because responsible for humanity, ethics forms part of the doctrine of God. The function of ethics is to bear primary witness to the grace of God as far as this is the saving engagement and commitment of humanity.

1. The Command of God and the Ethical Problem

In the true Christian concept of the covenant of God with humanity, the doctrine of the divine election of grace is the first element, and the doctrine of the divine command is the second. The Christian doctrine of God cannot have only God for its content. Since its object is this God, it must also have humanity, to the extent that in Jesus Christ humanity is made a partner in the covenant decreed and founded by God. The first element in the concept of this covenant is the doctrine of the election of the grace of predestination. However, the concept of the covenant is not exhausted by the doctrine of election. The partner in this covenant is humanity. What does it mean for humanity to be a partner in the covenant, in this relationship to God? In the doctrine of election, we had to ask the purpose of the electing God for humanity. We found the answer in the will of God to rule over humanity. God wills to take humanity into the service of God and the commissioning of humanity for a share in the work of God. God wills to make humanity a witness a witness of Jesus Christ, and by this, to become a witness to the glory of God. However, obviously, we must now go on to ask what it is

that God desires from humanity. What does God expect or demand from humanity? The divine election is the determination of humanity to this service, this commission, this office, of witness. When we come to this second question, we do not leave the circle of our consideration of the being, essence, and activity of God. Within this circle, the question arises. With the determination of humanity by God as this takes place in predestination, the question arises as to the self-determination of humanity, consisting in responsibility and decision, obedience and action. To answer this question cannot impose any limitation upon the knowledge of the authority of the grace of God. We speak only of the gospel. Ruling grace is commanding grace. The Gospel has the form and fashion of the Law. The one Word of God is both Gospel and Law. The content of the Word of God is Gospel, and the form and fashion of the Word of God is Law. Humanity derives from the grace of God, and therefore exposed to this question. Before humanity was, before the world was, God drew humanity into relationship with God. Strangely enough, because of this, sin presses insistently. Humanity is not content to be the answer to this question by the grace of God. Humanity wants to be like God. Humanity wants to know good and evil. Humanity wants to give this answer from within itself. Diverse ethical systems are the result of this prolonging of the fall. They are human attempts to answer the ethical question. However, this question can be solved by the grace of God, which allows humanity actually to be the answer. Such systems are similar to sin. The ethical question arises from human social experience. Yet, the grace of God, shown in Christ, is the sum total of the good. We cannot act as if we had to ask and decide the good from within human experience. Such a general conception of ethics is instructive. It speaks of an answer to the question of ethics which humanity works out for itself.

A general conception of ethics corresponds to sin. If the doctrine of God is ethics, this means that it must become divine ethics as the attestation of the good of the command issued to Jesus Christ and fulfilled by Christ. No other good exists part from this. Other apparent goods are good in dependence upon this good. Christian ethics has no positive connection to a general conception of ethics. Christian ethics cannot be its continuation, development, and enrichment. It is not one disputant in debate with others. It puts an end to the discussion and involves a choice and separation.

What I want to do is consider several approaches to the relationship between theological ethics and general ethical reflection.

First, theological ethics must believe in the work and revelation of the grace of God and the rule of God over all ethical problems. Theological ethics will regard the revelation of the grace of God as so true and the work of grace as so powerful that it understands humanity as determined by the command God and oriented toward what God intends. In theological ethics, moral enquiry and reply are dependent upon a response to the command of God. Theological ethics cannot disarm itself of its own traditions without destroying itself.

Second, theological ethics uses this Christian self-consciousness in several ways. One school of thought sees a special source for theological ethics. Another school of thought focuses upon the special subject of theological ethics, namely, the Christian. A third school of thought focuses on a special presupposition of theological ethics, such as the Spirit operating in believers. A fourth school of thought is the special content of theological ethics, such as moral law, the kingdom of God, and so on.

We need to contemplate two things. First, can theology restrict itself to a sphere that distinguishes itself remarkably by the concepts of religion, revelation, church, grace,

Spirit, and so on, but which characterizes itself as a very narrow and obscure sphere by its isolation from the sphere of reason, experience, and human self-determination? Second, can theology really ascribe to reason, experience, human self-determination, and so on, an independent content of truth, an autonomous dignity and authority, which in its own consciousness it can safely leave on one side? Is the revelation of God of the truth, or is it only the source of certain religious ideas and obligations, alongside which there are very different ones in other spheres? If theological ethics has to do with the command of God, this differentiation obviously belongs to the things that one cannot expect of it. We must forbid this line of thought as well, because it would then be that we would abandon the ethical task of the doctrine of God before we even begin it. The differentiation of theological ethics from other ethics can have meaning if we understand it as a provisional detachment from an ethics whose theological basis we cannot yet make explicit.

Alternatively, we could assert definitive detachment from an ethics that lacks or desires this theological basis and all ethical truth as enclosed in the command of God. To speak with universally binding force is an obligation from which theological ethics cannot possibly seek exemption. It has to take up the legitimate problems, concerns, and motives and assertions of every other ethics as such. Therefore, after testing them in ethics in so far as it has to receive from them at every point the material for its own deliberations. To that extent, its attitude to every other ethics is not negative but comprehensive. However, just because it is comprehensive, it is fundamentally critical and decidedly not one of compromise. It is in agreement with every other ethics adduced to the extent that the latter is obviously aware of its origin basis in the command of God. However, it cannot take it seriously to the extent that it tries to deny or obscure its derivation from the command of God with independent principles and autonomy. Either way, theological

ethics renounces openly the motive that lurks behind that division of roles. It will not assign separate tasks to itself and others to general ethics.

A third possible way to think about the relationship between theological ethics and other ethics is the Roman Catholic view. The problem is this. Within the framework of the command of the grace of God as the content of theological ethics, it cannot have the status that properly belongs to it.

The liberal Protestant view, theological ethics can never become a command that affects individuals personally and binds individuals unconditionally. It can certainly never become a command of God, as far as by God is meant the Lord who in Jesus Christ controls humanity by the decree of the mercy of God. The enterprise of theological ethics is not something with which to trifle. One must take it up properly, or one had better leave it alone. The complaint that we have to make against the Roman construction of the relationship between theological ethics and general human ethics is that it is dominated by this great distraction, and therefore it only plays at theological ethics. It thinks it can combine and coordinate the Christian and the human far too easily. To achieve this combination and coordination it has emptied out what is Christian. Therefore, in spite of its inherent advantages, we cannot accept it.

Now that we have made these delimitations, we can give the following outline of the ethical enquiry of a church dogmatics and its relationship to other ethical enquires. Starting out from the knowledge of the divine election of humanity, we can know of no human action that does not stand under the command of God, of no human existence that does not respond in one way or another to the command of God, which has not the character of obedience or disobedience to the command of God. This means, first, that even this general question has its basis in the fact that humanity is confronted with the

command of God, that the command of God is objectively valid for humanity. Only for the reason, humanity is in a position to ask about right conduct. However, if from the very first it understands humanity and the ethical problem from this standpoint, and regulates its own enquiry and reply in accordance with it, it immediately leaves the general series. In all its solidarity with this series, it confronts it as questions and summons.

Secondly, this orientation of theological ethics means that while it enquires concerning the right conduct of humanity, it cannot cease to attest and interpret the reality of God. Even as ethics, theology is wholly and utterly the knowledge and representation of the Word and work of God. What is said to humanity is the Word and work of divine election that has taken place and been revealed in Jesus Christ. This Word and work of God as such is also the sanctification of humanity, the establishment and revelation of the divine law. What right conduct is for humanity is determined in the right conduct of God. It is determined in Jesus Christ. He is the electing God and elected humanity in One.

However, Christ is also the sanctifying God and sanctified humanity in One. In His person, God has acted rightly towards us. In the same person, humanity has also acted rightly for us. In His person, God has judged humanity and restored humanity to His image. In this His person, humanity has reconstituted itself in the divine likeness. We do not need any other image but this. We do not need another Law or Gospel. We ask, "What ought we to do?" When we do so, we ask about Christ, for it is in Christ that we find the answer to our question. Christ has already rendered the obedience demanded of humanity. In Christ, the realization of the good corresponding to divine election has already taken place. The ethical problem of church dogmatics consists in the question of human action becoming glorification of the grace of Jesus Christ.

2. The Way of Theological Ethics

We must first refuse to follow all those attempts at theological ethics that start from the assumption that we must be build on a general human or philosophical ethics.

The goodness of human action consists in the goodness with which God acts toward humanity. However, God deals with humanity through the Word as the sum and fullness of all God, because God is good. Therefore, humanity does good in so far as it hears the Word of God and acts as a hearer of this Word. In this action as a bearer, humanity is obedient. Why is obedience good? Obedience is good because it derives from hearing and is the action of a hearer of the Word of God. Obedience is good because the divine address is good and because God is good. Humanity does good in so far as it acts as one who God calls to responsibility. Theological ethics will need to develop a basic and all-comprehensive truth in order to show that the command of God is an event. Once we lay this foundation, in later sections of the *Church Dogmatics* we shall have to show in detail to what extent this divine command God actually directs to humanity. Even as the command of God, the Word of God is the Word of the truth and reality of God in the act of creation, in the act of reconciliation, and in the act of redemption. The concept of the command of God includes the concepts of the command of God the Creator, the Reconciler, and the Redeemer.

37. The Command as the Claim of God

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, the command of God is the claim that, when God makes it, has power over us, demanding that in all we do we admit that what God does is right, and requiring that we give our free obedience to this demand.

1. The Basis of the Divine Claim

“For me, the good is to cleave to God.” Every ethics which is half serious will say this. The divisive question is why this constitutes the good. Why has God a title to humanity, and therefore a claim on humanity?

That God has the decisive claim on humanity is something that, if one establishes it as true in itself, is necessarily distinguished epistemologically from all other opposing assertions by the fact that this “Why” is met by an overwhelming “Therefore.” It might be said that God is the power over and in all things. God is the necessity that rules in all being and occurrence. God is the existence and activity of which we sense and experience, which we must also recognize as a necessity of thought. God becomes that to which even humanity is obviously subject, to submit to which is the best course for humanity because it is unavoidable, because humanity cannot evade this submission, because a reluctance to submit can only do harm without altering actual subjection. Of course, power as power does not have any divine claim, no matter how imposing or effective it might be. Power as a power cannot possibly be the basis of human obedience. At the same time, the sense of finite individuals upon a whole of which they have dim awareness in order to bring their lives to completion and fullness would seem to be a reasonable basis for bringing theological ethics and a general human and philosophical ethic into the same epistemological turf.

We have a circle, God and faith, and faith and God, are two things that belong together. In this circle, God becomes the One God for humanity, and humanity the one it is for God. The deity of God enters for humanity into the light and power of the specific, direct, personal encounter, and movement of actual faith in God, and the humanity of humanity enters for God into the same light and power. To this circle, there belongs the

fact that God makes the claim on this or that person in particular and the person accepts it.

We need to distinguish divine majesty from that which is not majesty. Godhead as power, godhead as the essentially good, the godhead in which we find our satisfaction, are not the God in whom we may believe. For this reason, they are not the God who really claims us. The being of the true God is determined and characterized generally by the fact that God is the God in whom we may believe. God has given us the divine self. God is not only mighty over us. God is not only the essentially good. God is not only our complete satisfaction. God has given the divine self to us. God has graciously turned to us. God has made the divine self ours. With the divine goodness of God, God has taken our place and taken up our cause. All this is actual in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Word became flesh. Without ceasing to be who God is, God became as one of us. God assumed our humanity into the divine self. Although it was darkened and destroyed by our sins, and under sentence of death, God took our humanity into the divine self in an indissoluble, unconfused unity. God did not do this because of its strength, dignity, or any other qualification. God did it only because of the divine good-pleasure and divine compassion. Our human existence is no longer alone. Our human existence is no longer left to itself. However, in Jesus Christ, God receives our human existence adopts it into the deity of God. In Christ, God has already, raised, cleansed, and transfigured into the divine likeness our human existence. The human existence of all of us is not really enacted as an undefined point in empty space, but in proximity, fellowship, even brotherhood with the human existence of Jesus Christ and therefore with the human existence of God. When God took our flesh in Jesus Christ, God undertook in our place to subject divinity to the judgment and punishment that God must execute if God is to

raise us up to God. The promise of the true repentance that God has performed for us is not something that we still must fulfill as something outstanding. God has already fulfilled this repentance. The fact that God is gracious to us does not mean that God becomes soft. At this point, the basis and justice of the divine claim emerge quite clearly, and so, too, do the situation of humanity in relation to it, the validity of the claim, and the necessity of meeting it. The relationship of Jesus to the will of God that we read in the New Testament is important at this point: John 6:38-39, 5:30, 4:34, Philippians 2:8, Romans 5:19, and Hebrews 5:6-7. Jesus is the one who does the will of God. What we find in Jesus is a valid model for the general relationship of humanity to the will of God. Jesus is the obedient servant to God as the Father in heaven, as the One who wills our salvation, and in and with our salvation, wills the glory of God.

The basis of biblical ethics is the legitimacy of the divine claim: Deuteronomy 27:9, 26:17-19, 6:20-25. Where people proclaim the grace of God as the resolve and act of God that one validly establishes the Law. One does this with authority and emphasis, and therefore impressively and effectively. We can say these things, as we understand the God who is the basis of the ethical claim as the God in whom we may believe, the God who is gracious to us in Jesus Christ. God is the God who, without ceasing to be God, has offered to become part of humanity and has made humanity participate in the divine. God is the God who has done good to humanity, and therefore has brought the good into the human sphere. God is the God who has summoned humanity by becoming human and as such not only demanding obedience, but also rendering it. God has spoken of the good by doing it. God has spoken of who God is by delivering the divine self up for us. In behaving in such ways, God is God. That is why God is the real basis of the ethical claim made by God. That is why God has the right to claim humanity for God.

2. The Content of the Divine Claim

Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

The truth of this text is what we have now to recognize and develop. The text proclaims the gracious God in Jesus Christ in whom we may believe and who controls the content of the claim addressed to us. Therefore, the grace of God has teleological power. The *telos* that humanity has set for itself as a child of Adam is invalid, and we can subordinate all other *telos* of its existence to this. The behavior of humanity must be a behavior actuated and directed by this impulsion. Starting out from this basic divine decision about humanity, humanity is not its own master in any of its own decisions. This basic divine decision predetermines everything that humanity will do or omit to do. In its very singularity, it will always bear the character of a human confirmation of this basic divine decision.

The concrete form of this teleological power of grace is the person of Jesus Christ. We have seen how the obedience of Jesus Christ reveals the basis and right of the divine claim. Submission to all other demands, even if made in the name of God, can only be provisional and not binding, and it always involves the risk of error. The criterion by which we measure all other demands is whether they, too, proclaim indirectly the life, rule, and victory of Jesus. If they fail to do this, they are definitely wrong, and when we know this, it is only with a violated conscience that we can submit to them. To become obedient to Jesus is actually to become obedient to God, not a conceived and imaginary God, but to the inmost essence of the gracious God we know in Jesus Christ. Nothing that we can do in fulfillment of the will of God is higher and deeper than to love Jesus and

therefore to keep the commandments of God, just because they are the commandments of God, just because we cannot love God without keeping the commandments of God. We definitely fulfill the will of God when we do this. We can see these commandments in New Testament texts: I Peter 2:21-22, John 12:26, John 8:12, Matthew 10:38, and Luke 9:57-62. When the disciples follow Jesus, we learn that they are to be with him, abide with Him, and accompany Him on His ways wherever they may lead. The disciples are to be where Jesus is, to hear what He says and see what He does, and therefore to be His ear-witnesses and eye-witnesses. No other meaning is possible even where the writer applies it to those whose attachment to Jesus is temporary. In every case, following means simply to be there, to be with Jesus. To want to be where Jesus is involves a resolution comparable to that of a person who desire to build a tower, or a king who desires to go to war, as in Luke 14:28-33. To want to be where Jesus is to abandon oneself to this total claim: to take one's cross, to deny oneself, to leave all, to love one's enemies. Why all this? Only because Jesus is there as the One who issues this claim. Only because Jesus is the Lord as the One who is subject to this claim, the obedient servant who in accordance with the will of His heavenly Father does all that these demands indicate. Being with Jesus means at once the separation of those who do not desire and are not able really to be with Him, and the acceptance of those who desires it and can do it because they belong to Him. However, the claim that His existence implies is still addressed to the former and valid for them. Perhaps tomorrow they will have the desire and the capacity that they do not have today. Perhaps those who have it today will no longer have it tomorrow. It is good to be with Jesus and not elsewhere. This is good because it is there that God is good for us. The passage from Micah is to the people of Israel and not to humanity in general. A condensation of the demand that is proclaimed,

established, and enforced by the fact that God has chosen this people to be the people of God, and to be the God of this people, as we find in Deuteronomy 10:12-25.

What are we to do? We are to do what corresponds to this grace. The imitation urged by Paul is the gracious attitude of God to people revealed in Christ. This attitude is the Law that is given to us. It is to this attitude that we and all our activity are bound, and by it that we are measured, and must orientate ourselves. One can see in Ephesians 5:1, I Corinthians 4:18, 11:1, I Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14, I Peter 3:13, Galatians 6:1, Romans 15:2, Colossians 3:13, Philippians 2:3-11 the thrust of theological ethics. It is clear that even where Paul declares himself as an imitator of Christ or the Thessalonians as imitators of those of Jerusalem, or where he summons to an imitation of himself, he is thinking only of this gracious attitude of God in Jesus Christ.

In Philippians 2:3-11, the basis of this exhortation to unity, and to the lowliness that puts the things of others about one's own things, is an appeal to Christians to live in the mind that is in Christ Jesus, and which must as such be normative for them. This is the mind in which He did not maintain Himself in His Godhead, but emptied Himself of its glory and assumed the servant-form of a human being, being obedient to God in this form even to the death of the cross. It is in this way, based on this gracious condescension, that He has been genuinely exalted and glorified anew. It is to this One who became a servant for us that every knee must bow, and every tongue confesses that He is the Lord.

What is required of us is that we need to bring our action into conformity with His action. What is meant by demanding conformity with divine grace, and to that extent conformity with Jesus Christ and His people? However, the required conformity with the grace of God is this. The actions of persons must be determined by the fact that they

accept the gracious action of God as right. To accept as right means to lay aside all hostility to God's action. To accept God's action as right is to love God in this action, to love God with all the heart, soul, and strength.

What are we to do? We are to live as those who accept as right, the fact that they do not belong to themselves, that they therefore do not have their life in their own hands and at their own disposal, that God has made them a divine possession in Jesus Christ.

What are we to do? We are to accept it as right that God never meets us except compassionately, except as the One who comes to the help of our misery, except apart from and against our deserts, except in such a way as to disclose that what we have deserved is death.

What are we to do? We are to accept it as right that God is our righteousness. We can sum it all up by saying that what God wants of all people is that we should believe in Jesus Christ. In the last resort, the apostles had only one answer to the question: "What are people to do?" They should believe in Jesus Christ. All the answers of theological ethics to the same question can only paraphrase and confirm the imperative: "Seek those things that are above, where Christ is."

3. The Form of the Divine Claim

The form and manner in which the command of God meets, imparts itself to, and claims humanity, is something we need to understand. Our present question is how humanity becomes its addressee and recipient. We ask concerning the distinctive mode of its revelation or, concerning the particular hearing that it demands and creates for itself in humanity as it claims the obedience of humanity. Of course, every object in the natural and historical world lays claim upon us to the extent that it demands our attention, observation, consideration, investigation, and understanding.

The form by which the command of God is distinguished from all other commands, the special form that is its secret even in the guise of another command, consists in the fact that it is permission. We know who orders here, and what makes this ordering peremptory: God in whom we may believe as the Lord who is gracious to us. God is gracious in the sense that God gave the divine self for us in order that we might live before God and with God in peace and joy. We know what it is that is ordered. We have to live as those who accept as right what God does for us. The command of this Commander is a permission, and in this it is fundamentally differentiated from all other commands. It is true that this command also says: Do this and do not do that. In the mouth of God, it means something different. Do this because we live by grace, and not some inner voice or the structure of the universe. Do this because in the death of Jesus God forgave our sin and rejection. Do this, because God has given us new birth in the image of God. Do this, because in doing it we find freedom. The command of God speaks in such concrete ways. The New Testament passage that stresses this dimension the most is James. However, we also find the same emphasis in other texts: James 1:22-23, John 8:36, Galatians 5:1, 5:13, Romans 8:2, 8:31-33, 7:1-6. The negative meaning of freedom is liberation from this Law. The positive side has to be added at once if this freedom is to be properly described. It is the new into the place of that Law there steps grace. For liberated people, the decisive consequence of this liberation consists in the fact that there is for them no condemnation. They may live as one who is not condemned. Further, the fact that may do this is the sum of what they ought to do, of what is required and demanded of them. It is the Son of God, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, who is condemned. Not only according to the whole tenor of the Epistle to the Galatians, but according to the clear and systematic context of Romans 6-8, freedom from the Law is

for Paul, as it is for James, the law of liberty. The *telos* of the Law, its intention, its general sum and substance, we can understand only when we understand it as the law of liberty. The command of God is the renewed offer of the grace of God that humanity has repelled. The command of God wants humanity to be genuinely free. The commands in the Bible not to fear and not to be anxious are examples of the freedom into which God wants to bring us. The anxiety and fear that are so strongly forbidden in this way obviously meet in the fact that when humanity is anxious and afraid, instead of going its way in confidence and hope. Humanity lets itself be burdened and arrested by looking at a threat that confronts it, and by the considerations that it lets the threat obtrude on it. The way in which the two conceptions are related is that anxiety is the term for a little fear, and fear the term for a great anxiety. Anxiety has to do expressly with penultimate things that we can envisage. It has to do with questions of the future external form of life. Anxious human beings want security in face of the uncertainty of its future before they go further and decide to live for that for which they should properly live. In fear itself, the contrast is more serious. In the New Testament, the object of fear is primarily Jesus Himself. In what they have in common, anxiety and fear, both in their difference and in their inner connection, are obviously the direct opposite of what the New Testament describes as freedom and of what we have described as the permission given to humanity by the command of God. On the other hand, it is obvious that they issue an order. On the other hand, it is just as obvious that in content what is commanded is simply the liberation of humanity. Christians who are summoned to an abiding and a standing have a possibility is what is given them in Jesus Christ and through life with Him and in His Church. The sum of all that is demanded of them is to make use of this possibility, or rather to let it realize itself. The anxiety and fear forbidden to them are definitely

excluded as this possible becomes actual. Humility, love, selflessness, and every other act of Christian virtue, the confession and the loyalty and perseverance of faith, the joyousness of hope are for Christians a simple duty and fulfillment of the injunction to let their light shine in the ordinary rule of life. Obligation means permission. That was the first point.

The second point is that permission also means obligation. The struggle is legalism on the one hand and lawlessness on the other. In the knowledge of the form of the divine claim, it is no more possible than in that of its basis and content to abstract from the fact that grace is grace. As we look at Him, based on the privilege gained and confirmed by Him, that God may call others and be children of the same Father. The problem distinguishing the command of God from other commands narrows down accordingly to that of distinguishing Jesus Christ from all other lords and ultimately and decisively from the lord that each of us would like to be over ourselves. The divine person is the fullness of the divine command. God wills that we should live in God, and God wills that we should belong to God. God wills that we should believe in God. The command of God is personal because it claims our obedience in relation to this definite person, Jesus Christ. However, in virtue of its personal character, understood in this way, the divine command demands a genuine decision. No other command can do this. All other commands claim us in definite relationship for definite attitudes and actions. However, within this limitation, it is distinguished from other commands by the fact that in itself it is unlimited in that it demands me. In virtue of its personal character, the decision demanded by the command of God cannot be other than a joyous one. No other command can be exclusive in this regard. Yet again, in virtue of the personal character of the decision demanded by the command of God, in all its distinctive genuineness and

joyousness, it can and must be continually repeated and confirmed. Every moment that lacks this fulfillment is in the strictest sense a moment of lost time, given to us by the patience of God, but not used by us for the purpose for which that patience gave it. The moment that lacks the fulfillment God gives is a piece of lost life because it cannot make life worth living. When did we not live in the illusion that we belong to ourselves? When was it not necessary for God to call us out of this illusion and for God to remind us that we belong to Jesus? We find the decisive Christological determination of the form of the divine command in consideration of the rich young man in the gospel narratives in Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30. What the young man lacks is being a covenant partner with God. The young man ran to Jesus, fell on his knees, but he did not go far enough. He needs to belong to Jesus. He leaves Jesus unworthy, impotent, and lost. He has all his possessions, except the fullness of Jesus. This fact condemns him. The sorrow with which the man leaves shows that command of God kills, even when it seeks to give life. Further, the point is that saving is something God does.

38. The Command as the Decision of God

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, the command of God is the sovereign, definite, and good decision concerning the character of our actions. We derive from this decision, we stand under this decision, and we continually move toward this decision.

1. The Sovereignty of the Divine Decision

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NLT)

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our bodies.

We need to move away from self-examination and toward the examination God gives to us. We need to consider the words for judgment and discernment in the New Testament: *dokimos*, *dokima*, *dokimizein*. First, assuming always the basic presupposition that God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, this illuminates the sovereignty of the divine testing, judging, and deciding over human being, willing, and doing.

Second, our own decisions are subject to this sovereign divine decision of God. Third, the necessity of making it is always in preparation for our approaching encounter with this supreme divine decision. We can see this point in the biblical witness: Psalm 139:1-2, 139:7, Hebrews 4:12, I Corinthians 3:13, I Thessalonians 2:4, James 1:12, Romans 2:5, 2:16, I Corinthians 9:27, II Corinthians 10:18, I Corinthians 15:3-4, and Romans 12:2. Humanity cannot approve itself. It is the idea of responsibility that gives us the most exact definition of the human situation in face of the absolute transcendence of the divine judgment. We live in responsibility, which means that our being and willing, what we do and what we do not do, is a continuous answer to the Word of God spoken to us as a command. The idea of responsibility, rightly understood, is known only to Christian ethics. This alone teaches a true and proper confrontation of humanity.

What ought we to do?

First, “What” ought we do? If we mean “what” seriously, every answer we and others may have given is continually questioned again. It means that the goodness of God is new every morning. It means that God will again receive and accept us as we are, and therefore with all our hypotheses and convictions as to what is well pleasing to God. The “what” necessarily means that we are not complacent about ourselves, that we do not anticipate the answer in view of the continuity of our previous works, that under the guise and pretext of the “what” we do not secretly ask: How can I progress further on the right path that I am already treading? It necessarily means that even in relation to our best works and the most sacred of our hypotheses and convictions we confess that we are sincerely sorry and repent of the way in which we have treated the grace of God even in our best works and the construction of our most sacred hypotheses and convictions. If we do not regret this, if we look back complacently to our previous progress under the grace

and command of God, how can we be honest and sincere when we direct a questioning glance upwards and forwards? The question asked seriously reveals a radical attack on our own lives and understanding. We have admitted the great possibility of the grace of God, that our own lives and understanding can be made new different. We have already conceded that we again need a complete openness. We have already confessed that we will go forward in this complete openness. This openness to new insights cannot remain somewhere behind us as the past of an instruction and conversion already accomplished. The continuity of divine grace in our lives, and our obedience to it, will be maintained only in so far as we do not refuse the discipline of the new beginning of our lives and understanding brought about by moral reflection. The church is most faithful to its tradition, and realizes its unity with the church of every age, when, linked but not tied by its past, it today searches the Scriptures and orientates its life by them as though this had to happen today for the first time. On the other hand, it sickens and dies when it is enslaved by its past instead of being disciplined by the new beginning that it must always make in the Scriptures. Similarly, the individual is true to himself or herself, and to the history of the act of God from which he or she derives, when he or she allows baptism to be the sign that stands over every new day. On the other hand, they necessarily sickens and dies from the moment they try to place the new day given them by the goodness of God under the sign of a previously experienced instruction and conversion. The principle of necessary repetition and renewal, and not a law of stability, is the law of the spiritual growth and continuity of our lives. The truth itself demands complete openness. From the standpoint of the truth itself, thoroughgoing conservatives are as useless as thoroughgoing modernists are. The old will persist and the new will come if they are worthy to do so. The old will pass and the new be excluded if they are not.

Second, What “ought” we to do? If this question asks after truth, we need to remember that the divine truth seeks us, the truth of the divine command desires us, demands us, binds us, and commits us, the truth that we must know because it is the rule and norm of our conduct. What is meant by this ought? It means what we are to will. We must keep this question distinct from that of what seems to us to be desirable, necessary, good, true, and beautiful, from the whole question of even the supreme value of this or that action. A command that transcends our actions cannot be merely a command that I have given myself based on what I myself have seen, experienced, felt, and judged of the good, true, and the beautiful. It must come to me as something alien, as the command of another, demanding as such that I should make its content the law of my life. The essence of the idea of obligation is not that I demand something from myself but that, with all that I can demand of myself, I am myself demanded. Unlike the Kantian imperative, it reveals the fact that to obey it is the highest duty and the highest good.

Third, what ought “we” to do? We ask concerning ourselves. As the question of grace and election must find its ultimate and decisive answer in the fact that we dare to live in correspondence to the divine predestination of humanity, so we can answer the ethical question only as we make our own the necessary reflection of humanity on its confrontation by the divine command. In ethics, it is not a matter of what somebody ought to do in a hypothetical case. The question is not whether people in general, or certain people, or even us, is in a hypothetical situation. It is a question of responsibility. Responsibility refuses to be delegated to humanity in general, to this or that group, or to ourselves in a different situation from our real one. No one can take our place in this matter. Someone summons us. We ourselves must step out, even from the conceptual and imaginative shadows of our own existence. We ourselves must give an account. We

cannot dissolve this question into that of “What ought I to do?” I am myself the subject of responsibility to the command of God, and therefore the subject of whom the question of ethical reflection speaks. However, I am this only as included in the “we.” I am the covenant-partner of God. However, my God is our God. I may and must hear the command of God, but the command of God applies to us all. Even the claim that God addresses to me is not for me alone but of universal validity. At this point, again, we have something to learn from Kant, especially his definition of the ethical as that which is adapted to be “the principle for a universal law.”

Fourth, what ought we to “do”? What we are commanded is never something that we can merely wish to know. We cannot stand aloof from it with the degree of detachment in which it can be for us a mere object of knowledge. God knows us, even if we do not know God. God drives us to serious reflection and in our own limits to the ordering of our way according to the command of God.

2. The Definiteness of the Divine Decision

We must now consider the conception of the divine decision, and the corresponding conception of human responsibility to it, from the standpoint that God gives us the divine Word. That God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ means a total divine claim to our obedience and a total decision concerning good and evil in the choice of our decisions. It means our total responsibility. For the love of God in Jesus Christ intends, seeks, and wills us in our totality. The work of atonement accomplished in Jesus Christ refers to the whole of our lives. Therefore, our gratitude for the divine love and its work can only be a wholehearted gratitude.

We can secure an advantage against the command of God by turning it into a general rule, for each individual application and embodiment is a matter of our judgment

and action. In such a case, the particular individual expression of the general rule is the result of our decision. As the verdicts of a human judge, which are particular applications in each case, according to his or own discretion, of what the law prescribes in general. We cannot compare the Law of God with any human law. For the command of God is not merely a general rule, but also a specific prescription and norm for each individual case. The command of God is an integral whole. In it, form, content, general prescription, and concrete application, are not two things, but one.

One incompletely grasps the concept of an unconditional truth of the divine command if one does consider its definiteness. No description of the command of God can do justice to the concept if it leaves us to understand by it a general norm or rule that has no definite content, truth, and validity of which are to be perceived and recognized apart, so that we can choose and make our own application of what it prescribes by our action. We must always be careful. We run the risk of simply doing what we wish. We run the risk of pouring the dictates and pronouncements of our own self-will into the empty container of a formal moral concept, making them appear as ethical claims when we are the ones who devise them. We become the judge and interpreter, justifying our own will in the situation. Surely, we cannot identify the categorical imperative of Kant with the command of God. Neither can our conscience be the supreme arbiter to which humanity is responsible. Even though conscience suggests the human capacity for self-reflection on behavior, it cannot bear the weight of the universal command of God. It would be an even worse abuse if we were to understand the ideas of the will, kingdom, glory, righteousness, or love of God, only formally as normative concepts that we would then fill in with our judgment and discretion.

In this definiteness, the command of God is unconditional, leaving us no other choice than that between obedience and disobedience. The objection is that God has not really given the command with such wholeness, clarity, and definiteness that it only remains for us to be obedient or disobedient. We must affirm this truth, because the witness of Scripture requires it. Everyone is without excuse.

If we are to assure ourselves of the specific character of the divine command in view of the biblical witness, we must distinguish two facts.

First, the divine law in the Bible is always a concrete command. The whole relationship of God with humanity is in the course of the historical unfolding of the covenant of grace, which forms the true content and object of the biblical witness, is continuously realized in the same of the divine commanding and prohibiting, the divine ordering and directing. Thus, we find specific commands, like leaving the Garden of Eden, leaving a country, circumcision, remove shoes from holy ground, and so on in the Old Testament narrative. We also find specific commands to go to Egypt, to go to the priest after a healing, to follow him, and so on in the New Testament. The consideration of such historical pictures compels us to consider the One who issues these directions. The hand of God is mighty and disposes the Word of God to specific people in specific situations. In the command of God, we are face to face with the person of God, with the action and revelation of this God. We can learn such lessons when we consider these historical pictures. The decisions of God that are normative for those of humanity are always made in this personal encounter. An ethics that separates the idea of what is commanded from the commanding God, and thus more concerned with erecting human orders, is not something we can construct from such historical pictures. This divine commanding is contingently historical, but also part of the plan of God and the fullness

and meaning that God brings to human life and history. We need to concern ourselves with the discovering of the meaning of the will of God in the commanding and forbidding by God, and not a general human meaning behind what God commands and prohibits. Such an historical ethics represents God as the Father or Lord who requires always this or that as a particular thing. In virtue of the special truth of its divine foundation and embodiment, this duty signifies the good that humanity is to perform, cooperating in the course of the history of the covenant of grace. Because the divine person and the divine cause are so specific in both the Old and New Testament, the commands and prohibitions of God are so specific and filled out so concretely. However, we must not overlook the fact that some biblical contexts in which the command assumes the form of general rules are valid for large numbers of people and are detached from any particular historical circumstances. The question arises how far we interpret the command in these passages differently from the historical sense upon which we have insisted. It is obvious from the secondary background of these passages that the theme of Bible is something other than the proclamation of ethical principles. Such texts strengthen the concrete character of the divine demand. Everything God requires from the individual in these summaries is the will of God for the people of God. Therefore, the requirements are also for individuals. Such proclamations of law declare God to be the Subject of these special summonses. God is the One who has the power and right to confront the individual in the addresses with binding commands and prohibitions because God is the Lord of the people or community to which the individual belongs. They speak of the command God as such and committed humanity as such. They show how God and humanity and humanity and God are bound to each other. The Ten Commandments belong to the whole corpus of ordinances for the common life, law, and culture of Israel.

The Sermon on the Mount is primarily a notification, proclamation, description, and program. As an announcement of the reign of God, the Sermon on the Mount makes the following declaration. Here on this earth and in time, in the immediate context of all human kingdoms and in the sphere of Satan who rules and torments fallen humanity, God has set up the reign of the grace of God. The reign of the grace of God brings us to the throne of the glory of God, the reign that as such is superior to all other powers, to which they belong, and which they cannot help but serve. As a self-disclosure of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount says that the reign of God, and with it the new humanity, has now appeared. If the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount seem to be well-chosen and even classical examples of biblical texts that may be plausibly interpreted as expressions of a general law without concrete or specific content, we can now see that this appearance is deceptive, and that the biblical witness knows no such thing as universal moral principles. What it does know are summaries of divine commands.

Second, we must understand this concrete commanding in the Bible as a divine command relevant to ourselves whom the command does not directly address. The Bible gives the special witness to the command of God we have described. Yet, we deceive ourselves about God if we think of God as a Lord of our life, and human life in general, who gives humanity certain guiding lines and principles on its way, but then leaves humanity to its own devices in understanding of this given norm. However, we also deceive ourselves about ourselves if we believe that humanity is left to itself, and that in this abandonment humanity is compelled and competent to be the interpreter of the divine norm and therefore to be its own judge, although in some way bound to the divine Law. The Bible is the source, norm, and judge of all ethical disciplines in the historical unity of its content. We are to understand and value its Word and a Word of command. However,

the Bible is not simply ethical instruction, a collection of ethical principles, or a collection of ethical examples.

3. The Goodness of the Divine Decision

We understand by goodness the sum of all that is right, friendly and wholesome. The command of God is absolutely and unquestionably prior to the idea of the good. The command as a divine decision is a kind of decision. God establishes the right, doing what is appropriate and creating order, by making a decision about humanity in the command of God. However, the friendliness and goodwill of God toward humanity moves God to do this.

First, because God and the command of God are good in this full sense of the term, we may not atomize the divine will. We cannot consider the specific commands of God in the Bible simply for that time and place. As an example, we might note the moral instruction in Romans 12:1-15 and chapter 13.

Second, because the command of God is good, in spite of the acknowledged diversity, it unites humanity. The above passage illustrates this purpose of the command of God.

Third, because the command of God is good, it unifies each individual. Since individuals do not experience unity within themselves, we ought not to be surprised that we are not one with each other. Inner consistency and continuity are lacking in the life of the individual, and therefore such little fellowship among people. The moral instruction of Romans 12-15 is a good example of this observation.

39. The Command of God as the Judgment of God

As God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, God also judges us. God judges us because it is the will of God to treat us as belonging to God for the sake of the Son. God judges us as in the death of the Son God condemns all our action as

transgression, and by the resurrection of the Son pronounces us righteous. God judges us in order that God may make us free for everlasting life under the lordship of God.

1. The presupposition of the Divine Judgment

The claim of God and the decision of God is the way God deals with humanity. The meaning and character of this event is again the judgment of God upon humanity. In the doctrine of God, the concept of the divine judgment brings us to the reverse side of the concept of the eternal decree of the election of grace, which stands at the beginning of all the ways and works of God. Summoned to appear before the judgment seat of God, forced to receive the enactment and disposition of God concerning humanity, incapable of being of making itself anything other than what humanity is, God invites humanity to the recognition that God counts humanity as belonging to God. God has received humanity into fellowship with God; humanity belongs to the province of God and God treats humanity as a possession of God. Humanity is a dweller in the household of God, a member of the people of God, and a citizen of the reign of God. As such, God calls humanity to account when God meets humanity in the command of God. As such, God makes humanity responsible. The command of God wills the sanctification of humanity, even as it judges humanity. It tells humanity that God wills to have humanity in relationship to God. Those who hear it cannot possibly hold that they are alien and indifferent to God. Their primary conviction is that God is presented to them, and that God seriously receives them, so seriously that God may ask concerning the conformity of their will with God, concerning their justification before God. To obey the command of God is to accept this invitation to live as those who belong to God, and therefore to rejoice as we stand in fellowship with this One whom God has judged. What God decides, executes, and reveals in Jesus Christ is what God wills with humanity, as well as

to have from humanity. Christ is the only-begotten Son of the Father, loved from all eternity, and in the eternal decree of God commissioned for the sake of humanity. Christ is the One who, in the eternal decree of God, and by the corresponding Word of God and work in time, is at once the Son of Man endowed and claimed by the grace of God. Christ first perceived the will of God with humanity, when Christ was in the bosom of the Father. It was Christ alone who in the first instance heard and took to heart the command of God for humanity. However, it is in Christ that the event actually takes place, and on the witness of Christ, that the insight depends that in this judgment humanity is actually lost. This means that the existence, actions, and decisions of humanity are shown to be unrighteous, contradicting and opposing the intention of God, and therefore provoking the wrath of God. In Jesus Christ, humanity stands under the judgment of the command of God in such a way that humanity experiences the threat with something worse than the wrath of God in that humanity become alien and indifferent to God, that God might cease to have any concern for humanity, as one who is completely unusable. Jesus Christ lived for the first statement of the question, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" He is the man whom God treated as the transgressor of the eternal counsel and command of God, thus rejecting Christ in righteous wrath and threatening Christ with that final dereliction. This was true of Adam, and is true of us, became true first in Christ. God has ordained us in Christ for life in covenant with God, to eternal life before God. God has made us the children of God by giving us the Son as our Brother.

2. The Execution of the Divine Judgment

The first result of the confrontation of humanity with the command of God is that it proves humanity to be the transgressor of the command. The essence of every transgression of the command is that humanity denies the fact, excusing and acquitting

itself in face of the accusation and sentence against humanity. This fact defines the depths of sin more so than any other sin does. Of all the things that God hates, the most hateful is that we do not admit who we are as transgressors. Rather, we excuse and justify ourselves as what we are. We are in fact transgressors. We are useless for what God wills with us and wills from us. We are lost for God. Because everything depends on what we are for God and before God, we are truly lost. God is gracious to us. That fact ought to be enough for us to seek and find God in the divine claim. Curiously enough, we would rather have nothing to do with this God who wills and does the very best for us. God is the aggregate of the supreme power, majesty, and above all worth. The danger is that we may understand God only as the sum of our own claims. We do not live and behave as those who are the property of God to whom God is merciful. We remain hostile, indifferent, self-willed, and without love. We desire many things, but we do not desire the one that God demands of us. We protest and revolt because the command of God pursues us so relentlessly. Grace is the secret of the command. Except in the light of this secret, we cannot understand this secret in its strong and radical claim upon us. Without this secret of grace, we would not know that the command puts us fully in the wrong. Without this secret of grace, people speak of the judgment of the command of God in the same way that the blind speak of colors. Blind people would not be blind if they could talk about colors in any way other than the unfortunate way in which they do. One must experience the secret of grace before anyone can expect another human being to forgo self-justification. One must experience the transgression of the sinner and experience acquittal if he or she is to recognize and confess no possible hope of standing ground before the claim and decision of God. The death of Jesus Christ is this act of divine proof, the execution of the judgment. This miracle alone has in fact decided the truth of the

statement that we are sinners. The love of God finds in this One, as the Representative of all the rest, nothing worth of love, affirmation, approval, praise, or divine pleasure. One can find to inward, excellent part in humanity, no higher striving, no imperfect obedience that might constitute even a relative perfection and therefore may humanity righteous and acceptable to God. If humanity has a glory to bring forward, where is God more likely to find it than at the point where it stands before the Father in the person of the Son? In Jesus Christ, God has found us as the people we are. The good will of God from all eternity was to see us in Jesus Christ, to deal with us as the Father deals with the Son and therefore as the people we are. The good will of God was to find us in Christ, to judge as the Father judges the Son. The good will of God was to give us in Christ our Head and Advocate, to establish and ordain our relationship to God in the relationship of Father and Son, and therefore to reveal the truth of our existence in Christ. As this happens, we are those whom god loves and knows in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must subordinate all self-judgment to the judgment of God. There, on the cross of Golgotha, hangs the human being who in His own name and person represented me with God. Further, in His own name and person represented God to me. Everything that God has to say in the divine and human relationship God says in Christ. Everything that I have to say to God in this divine and human relationship, Christ says on our behalf. All I have to do is repeat what the Father and the Son have already said in their conversation. However, what takes place in this conversation is that in the person of Jesus Christ, God addresses me as a sinner, a lost son or daughter, and that in the person of Jesus Christ, I confess myself a sinner, a lost son or daughter. At the point where God deals with me, where God has sought and found me, at the cross of Golgotha, I find myself exposed and addressed as a sinner.

All of this is the first word concerning divine judgment.

We must add a second word. We can comprehend that we are in the wrong before God only in the light of the fact that God will put us in the right in divine judgment, and that God is gracious to us in Jesus Christ. As God actually addresses the love of God to us, God condemns us as transgressors and malefactors in the person of the Son. However, we are acquitted and justified because it does so in the person of Jesus Christ, and therefore in a way that what remains for us is the forgiveness of our sins. In this way, divine judgment truly affects us. We must now turn to justification. The will of the gracious God and the purpose of the command of God is to bring freedom. When God gives us the commandment of God, God brings us to judgment as those whom God elects, loves, and blesses. God takes us so seriously as elected as covenant-partners that these are the lengths to which God has gone with us. Our forgiveness means that God does not allow us to fall under the past, present, and future accusation of the command of God. Even as the accused and condemned people we are, we do not cease to be the children of God, enjoying all our rights as the children of God. Forgiven sin means real sin, but sin in which God does not see or accept our sinfulness. Rather, God sees a reflection of the divine self, the love of God to us, the divine covenant, the divine faithfulness, and thus us as God knows us. Forgiven sin is our being and action as received and accepted by God as good in virtue of divine imposed, un-arbitrary, infinitely righteous, but free and fatherly good-pleasure. This divine will is good because God does not allow our sin, folly, and hatred to prevail before God, or recognize it as our essential being and condition, but rather cancels it. What God sees in us is snow-white, where we have made ourselves blood-red in divine judgment. Forgiven sin is our being and action in so far as God takes us into the heart of God, even though we are evil, accepting our being action as real obedience and righteousness before God. The forgiveness of sins, or justification, is

thus the total and radical acceptance of the sinner, and the total and radical reversal and conversion of the being and action in which humanity appears before the judgment seat of God, unable to either excuse or justify itself. The divine proof of the actual execution of the judgment must first speak for itself. This act of divine proof is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection alone is decisive for the truth that, as sinners before God, God pronounces us righteous. This human being was sinful in the sense that He was the Bearer of our sin and took our place before God, and therefore accepted the sentence and punishment of God for us. As our Head and Representative, Christ was sinful, and died for sin. As our Head and Lord, Christ also rose from the dead, and beyond that sentence received the justification of God. Having first been humiliated, Christ was now exalted to the right hand of God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals the fact that God makes no mistake in the faithfulness of God to the dear Son, and therefore that the latter does not cease to be this because He stands before the Father at Golgotha, burdened with all the actual sin and guilt of humanity and of each individual person. God treats Christ in accordance with the deserts of humanity as the transgressor of the divine command. The Father in divine faithfulness has set Christ there, and the Son in turn evinces a corresponding faithfulness by allowing Himself to be set there. For our sakes, the Father has set Him there and the Son has allowed Himself to be set there. His name represents and includes our name, His person is our person, both in what He suffers and in what He does, in what He undergoes both as condemnation and as justification. Humanity cannot help itself. However, humanity receives powerful and decisive help in Jesus Christ. Humanity has nothing to bring before God but sin. However, in shame and nakedness, Jesus Christ covers humanity, by the righteousness of the Head and Advocate. In this covering, humanity is righteous and acceptable to God because humanity can allow the

forgiveness accorded humanity to speak for humanity. In this covering, the Son speaks for humanity.

3. The Purpose of the Divine Judgment

The goal and purpose of divine judgment is that humanity should be the one who passes from this judgment, the one whom the divine command judges. As such, God wills to have humanity for a relationship with God. As such, humanity can live in covenant with God. We must speak more about this matter.

The people who come from the judgment of God are not the same as the ones who come to it. The judgment of the divine command is the secret of every day and hour of human life. Humanity is always on the point of coming to the divine judgment and coming from it. To the extent that humanity comes from it, humanity is never the same as it was. It is always another humanity. Humanity has a new orientation. The purpose of God has definitely found fulfillment in humanity. Humanity can never be the same as it was before. As those whom God judges and directs to divine grace, God calls us to faith. We need to clarify this faith. Faith is always the act of repentance, by which I mean, of the conversion that corresponds to the morning of each new day. The new day that we enter when we come from the judgment of God is that of forgiven sin. To walk in the light of this day and believe is to affirm that we recognize our forgiven sin as sin. When we do this, we repent. We are converted. We turn from disobedience to obedience. This transformation is what God wills of those whom God judges.

First, only of forgiven sin do we know sin for what it is. To know sin as sin, as our rebellion against God, we must know its forgiveness.

Second, only of sin recognized as such do we know that God forgives it. Without the knowledge of sin, humanity itself may ignore or forget it as a defect, error, or vice.

However, God does not ignore or forget. God knows. Ignoring and forgetting do not create the order that one must always set up. Only the forgiveness of God can do this, for God knows about our sin. From this standpoint, faith is conversion. The pardon of God puts us in freedom God intends. To believe is to turn from every opinion and conviction that we may have in our own strength about good and evil to the truth in which we stand before God according to the divine verdict. The purpose of God in divine judgment is the sanctification of humanity. Sanctification involves the direction, preparation and exercise of humanity for eternal life that God ordains and promises. Sanctification is the indissoluble, indestructible, unceasing, and unlimited life with God, the life of humanity in the clarity that is proper to God, in which God sees a reflection of God, in which God has always seen humanity too, but in which here and now humanity is so far unable to see either God or itself. Sanctification is the life of humanity in the participation in the joy of God that corresponds to this clarity, which was always the purpose of human life.

However, humanity waits for this sanctification, and therefore cannot rejoice in it now, except with profound disjointedness of human life with its doubtful and transitory joy. Eternal life is the life of humanity in harmony with the life of God and all the angels, but also with that of all the rest of the elect and creation. Eternal life is the harmony in which God saw and willed with humanity when God knew and willed humanity in the Word, which is the beginning of all the ways and works of God. Eternal life is the harmony in which God sees and wills humanity here and now, but in which here and now humanity hides itself from itself. Eternal life is the perfect entry of humanity into the service of the glorifying of God to which God has drawn humanity by determining humanity for the image of God. Further, here and now is the unresolved task of human life, waiting the time when God will reveal human life in its perfect solution as the reality of human life.

The divine purpose in the command, already fulfilled and realized, is that humanity, as one judged by it, may always enter a new hour and a new day, living actually and literally in the morning glow of eternity. In faith, sanctification is actually and literally a matter of grasping and having eternal life in its temporal form. God has this definite purpose. God sanctifies us for eternal life as God sanctifies us for a relationship with God. God wills the best for us as God seeks the glory of God. God is our hope as God is our Lord. God saves us from eternal death, and nourishes us to eternal life, as God causes us daily and hourly to die, and beseeches, allows, and command us to accept this in faith, in the perfect repentance of faith. We never see ourselves as those we are before God. We are never those that God has chosen us to be. In all the heights and depths of our lives, we look in vain for our true sanctification for God as God has already accomplished it. What we see in our own lives are all kinds of attempts and fragments, all kinds of unfulfilled and therefore doubtful beginnings, all kinds of half-lights that may equally well be those of sunset or sunrise. What we see suggests less our sanctification than for the fact that we have never come from the judgment of God according to the divine purpose, which testify just as much, and even more, against the factuality of our sanctification by the command of God. We can confirm this as the case by our faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot create it or complete it. Our faith in Christ can add nothing to the fact that Christ is our sanctification, fulfilled in Christ. It can only confirm and accept the fact that it is so. that we agree to participate in this sanctification, without which we are nothing, so that we live as those we are as the property of God is something self-grounded and speaks by the voice of the Good Shepherd. We necessarily look away from Jesus Christ, and speak of faith without true faith, if we describe it in any other way than as the confidence in which we who have every reason to fear have no one and nothing to fear. As Jesus Christ calls

us, as the One whom we hear, Christ gives us the Holy Spirit in order that the relationship of Christ with the Father will find repetition in us.