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**BARTH**



**BARTH**

by

A. D. R. POLMAN

Translated by Calvin D. Freeman

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## CONTENTS

Selected Bibliography .....	6
The Author .....	7
I. Introduction .....	9
II. Barth's view of Scripture .....	16
III. Barth's doctrine of predestination .....	31
IV. Barth's doctrine of creation .....	55
V. Some concluding remarks .....	67

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### THE AUTHOR

Dr. A. D. R. Polman was born in 1897. He studied philosophy and theology at the Free University of Amsterdam and was a pastor for nearly twenty years. In 1936 Polman received a Ph.D. in Theology at the Free University. In 1949 he became professor of Dogmatics in the Kampen Theological Seminary.

Dr. Polman is the author of many articles and is considered an authority on Augustine. He is best known in the Netherlands for his four volume work, *Onze Nederlandse Geloofs belijdenis*, which he completed in 1953.

His monograph on Barth was translated for the Modern Thinkers Series by Calvin D. Freeman, of the Biology Department at Wilkes College.

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## INTRODUCTION

Karl Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1886. In 1891 his father, Fritz Barth was appointed professor of New Testament at Berne, so that Karl Barth completed his gymnasium training in Berne and for a few years attended the University there before continuing his studies at Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg where he was influenced especially by the theologians, Wilhelm Hermann and J. Weisz, and by the neo-Kantian philosophers, Cohen and Natorp.

For two years after the completion of his academic studies Karl Barth was the assistant of Martin Rade, the director of the well-known periodical, *The Christian World*, and his short career as a journalist undoubtedly affected the formulation of his later theology.

From 1911 until 1921, he was a pastor in the small village of Safenwil in the Swiss canton, Aargau. These were very fruitful years as is clearly seen from the discourses and treatises which are now in *The Word of God and Theology* and *Theology and the Church*. And these writings still provide the best introduction to his thought. In particular we would mention: *The New World in the Bible*, *Bible Questions*, *Need and Promise of Christian Preaching*, *The Word of God as the Task of Theology*, *Reformed Doctrine, Its Essence and Task*, and *Dogmatic Fundamentals with Wilhelm Hermann*.

It became increasingly clear to him that the only justification for theology lies in its complete obedience to the word of God. The Reformed fathers had already stated this in a concise manner in the first thesis defended in the debates at Bern in 1528: "The holy, Christian church, of which Christ is the only head, has been born from the word of God, abides therein and obeys not the voice of *any other*". God spoke to them therein, and where God speaks, unconditional obedience and surrender are the only proper response.

However, at the same time, Barth was coming more and more to the conviction that this reformation view of the living word of God, which alone has authority and which is appreciated only through the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit and through a powerful faith, was lost soon after the Reformation. Actually people forgot rather quickly that men spoke about God when they called the Bible

the word of God. They stepped out from the living circle of Scripture and the Spirit and reduced the Bible to an infallible authority of the letter. In addition to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which was no longer understood rightly, men began to inquire after all kinds of proofs for the truth of Scripture. The mighty voice, "God Speaks," was all the more immersed in various sorts of rational arguments which deprived the old root of its nourishment; and when, in addition to this, historical criticism took hold, men were content to offer as their only defense the theoretical pronouncement of an inspired Bible, inspired even to the point of punctuation marks, or they involved themselves in controversy which resulted in sad defeat.

The complete turmoil of modern Protestantism took shape. To escape the rigidity of doctrine in *orthodoxy*, doctrine shaken loose from its source, refuge was taken in *pietism*, in Christian experience, which completely mistook its real source. The much-esteemed *Enlightenment* reduced this dead teaching to a few moral rules. And Schleiermacher, together with all of his disciples, left wing and right wing, reduced everything to the religious instinct of the individual.

Barth feels that such confusion constitutes the four walls of a prison, in which all are kept under lock and key; one person in one corner, another person in another, and the walls are covered by a roof which keeps us from viewing heaven, and distorts revelation.

Consequently, Barth would change the course radically, from the subject to the object, from religion to revelation, from pious and mystical experiences to the authoritative Word of God!

Reformed doctrine has need of the brisk, wholesome atmosphere of the knowledge of the word of God, derived from Scripture and the Spirit. The service of men must again become the service of God and not the reverse. With prophetic passion Barth calls back bewildered Christians to the battle of Jeremiah with the priests and prophets of his time; to the unrelenting opposition of Paul against the religion of the Jews; to Luther's breach with the piety of the middle ages; and to Kierkegaard's attack on the beggarly Christianity of his day. Man must again be confronted with God, with the living God of the prophets, apostles and martyrs. He will then become aware that this God confronts him as the impossible in relation to the possible, as death over against life, as eternity in contrast to time. The real distress of existence is made manifest and results in a completely new event: the impossible itself becomes the possible, death becomes life, eternity becomes time, and God becomes man.

A new event reveals itself, an event to which no human avenue leads, an event which no human instrument can apprehend. For the

avenue and the instrument are themselves new elements - revelation and faith. Barth is here concerned with Jesus Christ, the only way and the only revelation of God.

In this period of his ministry during which so much was surmounted, there appeared finally like a trumpet blast, a forceful proclamation, his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. It is perhaps one of the most striking books that has even been written. It claims to be a commentary and it is anything but one. It has been *frowned upon* by theologians and rightly so — and yet no other commentary has been so widely read and so widely translated.

Whoever looks for a careful exposition of a particular text is nearly always disappointed and irritated because the work is with exceptions a construction of Barth rather than an exposition of Paul. Ideas are expanded and embellished which never occurred to Paul, and yet our interest remains undiminished. Because of the style, the content, and the vigorous and passionate convictions which accompany every sentence, the reader is fascinated, and wounded to the heart.

Captivated by God's Word, Barth has a message for the church and believers; his language is sharp and cutting, sometimes a bit crude; his words strike the reader again and again. His utterances are a continuous declaration of war on all subjectivism, historicism, psychologism and ethicism.

The pride, the blameworthy conceit of all the godly and ungodly, the hypocrisy of the church, which denied her source and betrayed her fatherly inheritance, are *attacked* with unsparing *fierceness*. Every possible critic of the church and of pious religion, from every *existing camp*, is gladly received as a confederate member. Quotations, slogans, not to be forgotten mottoes, catchy figures of speech, sharp-cutting satire, painful questions from the works of Kierkegaard, Dostojevski, Kutter, Overbeck, even from Nietzsche, are all encountered repeatedly. Barth is unconcerned as to where he finds his weapons if they but pierce the human conscience.

The death knell is sounded over all the virtues and excellencies, not primarily of the natural man, but of pious Christians who believe that they have found in their own inventions and experiences a safe refuge from the burning wrath of God. Everyone falls under his disapproval. But because he has been so captivated by the Word of God, Barth would not destroy everything and leave us among the ruins. Nor does he blow out the lights which still provide a small glimmer in this dark world so that we sink in the oppressive darkness of doubt and despair.

On almost every page, Barth speaks of God, the Wholly Other, the

unsearchable one, and of Jesus Christ, who himself, as the Word, was in the beginning with God and who is God. The way in which Barth speaks of God and his Son has been determined by a vigorous reaction against the theology of the nineteenth century. The latter practically forgot the transcendence of God and thought the *mystery* of Jesus Christ could be explained in terms of the "life of Jesus."

A single citation from the first chapter of the commentary sheds light on Barth's reactions. When Paul in Romans 1 : 16 calls the gospel the power of God, Barth gives this phrase the following interpretation: The power of God is the action — the wonder of all wonders — in which God makes himself known as that-which-he-is as the unknown God who dwells in unapproachable light; the Holy One, who is the creator and redeemer. All the gods who stay on this side of the line drawn by the *resurrection*, who abide in temples made with hands, all the gods *whom* man *needs and claims to know* are not God at all. God is the unknown God, and as such gives all men life and breath and all things. Therefore, his power is neither a power of nature nor a power of the soul nor one of the higher or highest powers of which we have knowledge or of which there *exists the possibility of gaining knowledge*. God is not the highest, not the sum total, not the source but the *climax* of all powers; the Wholly Other, according to which are measured something and nothing, nothing and something, the first mover and the final resting point, the source from which all powers arise and the goal which gives them a basis. The power of God is pure and sublime. It does not exist next to or above other powers. The power of God is beyond all causality, all causes and effects. The power of God cannot be equated with or exchanged for such finite causes and can be compared to the latter only if extreme caution is exercised. The power of God, the *installation* of Jesus *as* the Christ, is in the narrowest sense of the word, a presupposition, free from all tangible content. It takes place in the spirit and desires to be known through the spirit. It is self-sufficient, *uncaused* and true in itself. All doctrine, ethics, and Christian worship are nothing but the shell, the empty space in which the message displays itself. The message only includes such words, works and things which, as negations, point to the Holy One. If content is supplied in the gaps, and positive assertions are used to replace negations, the message then becomes a human accessory, regrettable misunderstanding, in which possession and being are substituted for privation and hope. The message then becomes Christendom instead of Christ-dam, and has nothing more to do with the power of God, which for Paul means the power of the unknown God.

And a few pages earlier in interpreting the words "Jesus Christ our Lord" of Romans 1 :4 Barth affirms that this is the gospel, the meaning of history. In the name Jesus Christ two worlds meet and separate into two spheres, the known and the unknown. The known world, created by God, is the world of the flesh; fallen away from its original unity with God, it needs redemption. It is our world, the world of man, of time, of things. The known sphere is intersected by an unknown plane, the world of the father, the world of original creation and final redemption. But this relationship between us and God, between this world and God's world needs to be apprehended. The ascertainment of the dividing line between both worlds is not self-evident.

The *point* where the dividing line is to be seen is Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus, born of David's seed. Jesus as an historical determination signifies the point of departure between the world known to us and the world which is unknown. In themselves, events and men do not transcend the world we know. But insofar as such events center around Jesus, God discloses the hidden dividing line between time and eternity, an event and its origin, between God and man. The years one to thirty are the age of revelation and discovery, the age in which the new, different and godly consummation of all ages is seen, an age, however, which abolishes its own uniqueness by making it possible for every age to become an age of revelation and discovery.

The focal point which announces the presence of the entirely unknown sphere does not itself coincide with the realm we know. The emanations or rather the gaps through which the unknown discloses its presence within the historical realm are not the other world. And insofar as our world comes into contact with the other world through Jesus, our world ceases to be historical, temporal and tangible, our world is no longer perceptible.

Jesus has been "mightily installed as the Son of God according to the Holy Spirit, through his resurrection from the dead." This installation is the true significance of Jesus and as such is not to be historically ascertained. Jesus as the Christ is the end of time. He is to be understood only as paradox (Kierkegaard), as conqueror (Blumhardt), as primeval-history (Oergeschiedenis) (Overbeck).

As the Christ Jesus is the plane unknown to us, the realm which perpendicularly encounters the surface that we know. Within the realm of history, as the Christ, Jesus can only be understood as a problem and myth.

In his resurrection, the new world of the Holy Spirit meets the old

world of the flesh. But the new world comes in contact with the old one as the tangent of a circle, without intersecting it, and just because the new does not touch the old, the new encounters the old as its own limitation, as a new world. No amalgamation of God and man takes place here, no exaltation of man to the godly being, and no pouring out of the godly into the human being. What meets us in Christ, since it does not touch us, is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Creator and Redeemer. The Kingdom has really come. Jesus Christ is "Our Lord." Through his presence in the world and in our lives we are elevated as men and grounded in God; through a glance at him we are set motionless and brought into motion, as one both waiting and running "God" in the epistle to the Romans is no empty word because as the Lord, He is exalted above Paul and the Romans.

There are two ways of approaching such passages, with which this remarkable book abounds. A verbalist discovers numerous heresies: the one-sided emphasis upon the transcendence and *mystery* of God; the installation of Jesus as the Christ through the Spirit, the degradation of all doctrine, ethic and worship to an hollow void, the view that the transformation from Christ-dom to Christendom involves the exclusion of every communication with the power of God in Christ; the speculation concerning the two intersecting planes, the juggling of concepts as paradox, myth, history, primitive-history (*Oergeschiedenis*), tangents of a circle — all of these come to stand under pronouncements of anathema. Those who defend and oppose this interpretation of the Epistle to the Roman have understood it in *this way*. The former have constructed whole systems out of it and have propagated it as the highest wisdom, as the gospel which has just been discovered. The latter have discovered heresy to the point that it sometimes seemed that all the teachers of false doctrine throughout the ages here have given assent.

But one can also look at the work in an entirely different light and listen to the language of the reaction which mischievously exaggerates and is consciously one-sided in order to awake a spiritless Christendom out of a peaceful slumber. One can then hear a comprehensive judgment upon the one-sidedness of the nineteenth century. A definite position is taken against all immanent theology, in which God became nothing more than pious and mystical experience, and came into existence by the grace of the subject, so that the living God was no longer placed in the center, but was replaced by believing man, and by a sentimental image of God formed in religious tenderness. Every concept of revelation, in the truly Biblical sense, was as good as lost. Against this Barth's anger kindles, as he preaches

the God of the prophets and the martyrs, whose way is in the whirlwind and whose path is lost in the great waters. So strong an emphasis is laid upon God's transcendent majesty and unapproachableness that even his revelation proclaims his mysteriousness. All Platonic, Aristotelian, deistic or pantheistic views of God are thrown overboard as worthless, since they belong to the side of death and of idols, over against which there stands the *unalterable*, immeasurable, and unapproachable manifestation of God's power in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Secondly, Barth thunders against all romantic, psychological and historical interpretations of the life of Jesus. The historical Jesus detached from godly being, the very precious Lord Jesus of mysticism and of pietism, the teacher of wisdom and the friend of men of the Enlightenment, the *sum and substance* of true humanity (Schleiermacher) — offer only an empty throne without a king. Their warm worship is guilty of nothing less than idolatry (deification of the creature). In reaction Barth begins on the other side. The Christ of God now stands so much on the side of God that his coming into the world in the flesh is *at once reduced* to the perpendicular encounter of two worlds.

Whatever one may think of this unusual commentary, its message has been heard the world over. Birch Hoyle remarked that after the publication of this commentary Barth could say with Lord Byron, "I woke up one morning and found that I had become famous." A special chair in Reformed Theology was subsidized at the Lutheran Theological Faculty of the University of Gottingen and Barth was appointed to it in 1921.

In 1925 he went to Münster where he discussed and staunchly upheld the antithesis to the Roman Catholic Church. In 1929 he went to Bonn, and spent the happiest years of his life until his opposition to Hitler caused his exile. Since then he has been at the University of Basel. On his fiftieth birthday his bibliography included two hundred titles and since 1936 many more have followed.

Whether or not Barth has changed in these years is a most interesting question. Has he undergone certain changes in his theological views? Has the direction of attack only been diverted or have there been radical changes in his system itself?

A scholarly answer to this question would require nothing less than a volume. It seems appropriate in this short study to notice three topics on which Barth has not changed and which touch the heart of his theological conviction: his doctrine of Scripture, of predest-

ination, and of creation. An exposition of these topics as presented in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* provide a good introduction to his theology and offer ample opportunity for a comparison of his theology with the Holy Scripture, the only judge in settling all differences.

## II. BARTH'S VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Barth is convinced that the Holy Scripture is not itself revelation but is rather a *witness of revelation*. To identify the Bible with revelation is a fatal error. Everyone distinguishes a particular occurrence from the description of it, and the revelation of God and the human description of it are never *identical*. The Bible is the concrete means through which the present-day church is reminded of God's revelation in the past. The Holy Scripture provides a witness to God's revelation. Just as John the Baptist points to the lamb of God, so also all witnesses of revelation direct our attention to the Christ, who has come and is coming and by means of this our attention is directed to the Word spoken by God himself. These witnesses, therefore, never seek authority for themselves because they forcefully feel the distance between their poor, small human words and the indescribable Word of God. Because these witnesses cannot keep silence, their writings reveal the human attempt to repeat and emphasize, in human thoughts and words, the wonder of God's Word in certain human situations.

The Bible is therefore no infallible word of God but a thoroughly human book. The writers of the Bible were not infallible organs but genuinely real men with passions as our own. To fail to take this into account is to fall into the old error of docetism. The prophets and the apostles, as office bearers and witnesses, were as historically conditioned, in the recording of their testimony, as any other historical New Testament event e.g., Jesus' death on the cross, Lazarus in Bethany, etc. The apostles remained sinful in their actions and fallible in their spoken and written word. Just as each blind man healed was really blind, and each lame man really lame, each human limitation of the apostles and prophets continued to be in effect.

One cannot expect the writers of the Bible to have had access, in their encounter with God's wonderful revelation, to a compendium of wisdom such as Solomon's. One cannot ask for divine knowledge of all things in heaven and earth. The Biblical writers were and remained children of their time. They possessed a perspective which is not ours. They did not know the difference between history and legend or saga. The religious and theological aspect of the Bible is also vulnerable in every sense. When the authors took their post as

witnesses of revelation, they used the language and conceptions of their surroundings with all of the resulting consequences. There is more than one contradiction in Scripture, e.g., between law and gospel, between John and the writers of the synoptics and between Paul and James. It is not to be denied that the Biblical writers without exception spoke and wrote within limits and are therefore relatively vulnerable and fallible. Whoever denies this finds himself gaping at a beautiful mirage to which no reality corresponds. Even as witnesses of revelation the apostles and prophets were men, sinful men, *able to* commit errors in every word, and *they did* commit errors in every word (Italics are Barth's). Will Barth then have nothing to do with inspiration? Does he deny the divine in-breathing of Scripture as do most present day theologians? Yes and no. He applies himself vigorously against the Reformed doctrine of Scripture (which maintains that God's revelation is recorded infallibly in a book). Barth believes that the classic doctrine of Scripture stabilizes, records and thereby degrades revelation into a fixed palpable reality.

The Scripture thus becomes a paper pope, a codex of the truths of revelation, an infallible book from which everyone can read certain truths and in which everything, even the instructions to Timothy to bring Paul's cloak along, are literally inbreathed by the Holy Spirit. To be sure, Barth cannot dispute the fact that Paul emphatically avers that he has received the gift of the Spirit that he might be able to declare the divine blessings of divine wisdom, "not in words which human wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches" in spiritual words which comprehend and embrace spiritual wisdom. He will not even deny that on the ground of I Corinthians 2 : 6-16, Paul *reckoned* with inspiration of the subject and words of the holy writings of the Old Testament. Paul views himself, according to Barth, not only as a witness of divine benevolences, so that his words respecting divine mercies have value only as an historical record. Paul regarded his words as coming from above; he viewed himself as one made competent by the Spirit. And Paul believes he is enabled and instructed by the Spirit to speak appropriately concerning these mercies.

In his comprehensive historical exposition of the church's conception of the inspiration of Scripture, Barth subscribes to the words of Gregory of Nazianza that every stroke and every line of Scripture has been *brought about* by virtue of the Spirit's close attention. Even the slightest turn of the writers has not happened without a purpose and it is not without reason that every stroke and line has been preserved. And when Barth gives his undivided attention to Matthew

5 : 17, that Christ has not come to destroy the law and prophets but to fulfill, he is careful to say something more. For if the witnesses of revelation belong to revelation, in their concrete speech and writing, and if they have spoken *through* the Spirit what they have known by the Spirit; and if we really are to hear their words we must then treat all their words with equal respect. And it is arbitrary to judge their inspiration exclusively by any element which appears important to us or by considering the thoughts and opinions which motivated them, while disregarding the words themselves.

Anyone unfamiliar with Barth and his writings is amazed and bewildered by such passages. For how can they be reconciled with his assertion that the writers of the Bible, as witnesses of revelation, not only could err, but did err in all their words.

We shall return to this remarkable contradiction. Notice here that immediately after this passage Barth explains that the Church Fathers started this great error in order to focus attention upon the actuality of the written Word of God. Inspiration was not an inspiration of the words of the Bible which took place again and again by an actual act of God's grace but it was rather a *perfectum*, a finished work, a closed fact, an inspiredness of the Scripture. Paul knew nothing of this. And out of this view of inspiration has proceeded all the misery of later times. The mystery of God's Word has been removed. God's Word has been degraded and robbed of nobility and strength, and the writers of the Bible are reduced to clerks, flutes, mechanical instruments. Even the commas and periods were declared to be inspired. The words of the witnesses of revelation were recorded as the words of God, and the secret of God's unhindered presence was lost in the mouths of the Bible witnesses, as well as in the ears of the listeners, and the hearts of the readers. Especially in the seventeenth century did the Bible become a book of oracles. Men wanted a constant, tangible, human assurance instead of a replenished, and again to be replenished, divine assurance. The Bible became an infallibly inspired writing, from which everyone could deduce the truths of revelation.

This unfortunate theory, which deprived many generations of an insight into the true, spiritual, reformation meaning of the *thesis* "The Bible is the Word of God," is responsible for the excessive measure of Rome in 1870, in which the Pope was declared infallible. It is also responsible for the modern conception of history as revelation, propagated during the reign of Hitler by German Christians.

This doctrine must be banished and has been banished, even though it persists as a theological bogey-man in some circles. What

must take its place? How does Barth view inspiration? Barth proceeds from the all-ruling consideration that God's Word is always the Word of God, but it is not at our disposal. The *dictum*, "the Bible is the Word of God," does not refer to the Bible as such. It is a dictum which refers to God's being and works within the Bible. Inspiration must always be received with absolute recognition of and reverence for the *unhindered* sovereignty of him whose Word is the Bible. The Word of God is God's work and therefore belongs entirely to its own category.

The Bible serves as a reminder of this *operation* of God's Word and provides us with the expectation that we also shall receive this extraordinary event of God's revelation. The Holy Scripture — and with this designation we render to *it* the highest authority — is the place where we must await the wonder of God's Word. For this reason, we accept without objection the humanity of the Bible and the possibility of *offence*. The prophets and apostles remained fallible and erring men, even when they took their post as witnesses of revelation. But this is precisely the wonder: that the lame walk, the blind see, the dead *live again*, and sinful and erring men spoke the Word of God; and it is this wonder which is meant when the Bible is called God's Word. The truth of the dictum is that the offence is discarded through the power of the Word of God. As with the cross of Christ, the offence consists in the fact that the Word of God became flesh and, grounded his church, called her, gathered, enlightened and sanctified her until this day. The offence, as the triumph over it, is grounded in God's mercy, and can therefore not be denied nor *put aside*. Every transformation of God's Word into an infallible human word, and every conversion of the human words of the Bible into an infallible Word of God is a rebellion against the real wonder: that fallible human beings, in fallible human words, here utter God's Word. It is resistance to the sovereignty of grace, in which in Christ, God Himself became man to glorify himself in his humanity.

Whoever is not satisfied and *requires* a stricter conception of the value and authority of the Bible might do well to *inquire* whether or not he is actually spending his time in diminishing the real value and authority of the Bible. For if the apostles and prophets were not really human and accordingly not fallible, in their office, in their speaking, and writing of God's revelation, then there is no wonder in the fact that they speak God's Word. But how can it be God's Word which they speak if there is no wonder?

In opposition to the postulate: "They *could not* have erred if their word *is* God's Word." Barth proposes the thesis that they *were able*

*to err* in every word and *they did* en in every word; and that being justified and sanctified by grace alone, the apostles and prophets spoke God's Words with their fallible and erring human words. That we partake in the Bible of the real wonder of the grace of God to sinners, is the real value and authority of the Bible, not the aimless miracle of human words which are not really human words.

God's presence in Holy Scripture is not an inherent, abiding property. With the Church of all ages we can say that in the entire book, in all of its components, the Word of God has been heard. And we expect that the Word of God shall again be heard in this book. But, God's Word never coincides with the book itself. The Word of God is always a free, sovereign act of God. The bathing water at Bethesda was used again and again by God, at his own time and through his free choice. So is it also with the Bible. We must cleave to the Bible, and continually study it, and understand it. And we must pray that the wonder may occur afresh.

We do not differentiate in the Bible between the divine and the human, between form and content, between spirit and letter. But the actual revelation of God can never be at our command. God is not bound to what we call the divine, the content, the spirit. Nor is God elevated above the form, the letter, the human. God was not ashamed of the fallibility of human words: their natural and theological errors and contradictions, the uncertainty of their tradition, of their Judaism, but rather he made use of them. God makes use of them as an act of God outside of time, an act we cannot determine. For when we reflect upon such an act, it is already past. We can remember it and wait for it anew, but we cannot grab it nor have it at our command.

Only in such a manner does Barth speak of revelation. The Bible is a purely human book, which when viewed on the historical level is fallible, contains errors and contradictions, and is open and subject to criticism. But the situation is quite different at the dimension of faith. For here we know that God has used this entire Word for his service and as his instrument. God, in his sovereign unrestrained power, has repeatedly taken a fallible, human Biblical text and transformed it into his Word. Such a text then speaks and testifies and *ought then* to be read and heard as his Word. For through such a text, the Word of God then speaks. When God then speaks to man, he speaks the language of concrete human words. That is the true merit of verbal inspiration (in-breathing of the words). Inspiration does not imply the infallibility of the words of the Bible in their grammatical, historical and theological character, as human words.

The wonder is that fallible and erring human word *are at* that moment used by God, and irrespective of their human fallibility they must be heard and accepted. A Biblical text is afforded an entrance or gateway by God alone. He exercises complete control. It makes a big difference, however, whether we wait at the gateway of the Bible or move on to other gateways.

As the gateway opens, the Word of God remains the Word *of* God, beyond the reach of our *limits*. God's Word is only understood by God; our understanding is limited to an awareness of its own limits. Our ascertainments are nothing more than indications, signals, that God's Word is God's Word, unbound and unrestrained, not to be fixed in any thesis or antithesis. Concerning the "how" of the Word, we understand and can say nothing. No system of the truths of revelation can properly be constructed. The Word *of* God penetrates the creaturely; it becomes flesh, but it nevertheless remains his secret. Whenever God speaks to man, this event is not essentially different from other events. Even preaching is a *recitation*. The Bible is also a product of a near Eastern tribal religion. Jesus Christ, compared to other founders of religions is to some extent a rather banal rabbi of Nazareth. God's Word has been given in a form which is *not* God's Word.

The self-disclosure of God is never immediate, but is always indirect, in a double sense, in a figure which is not God's Word, and then in a puzzling form (I Cor. 13 : 12). The figure, the form, is of itself unbecoming; it does not agree with the subject matter but opposes it. It does not disclose the matter but covers it up and in this concealment, it brings it to light. And then the place where this wonder arises is subjectively and objectively the world in which sin reigns.

If revelation were immediate then it would be bound to a subject matter and God's *free* power and sovereignty would be *fixed*. But in indirect revelation, God remains free; and whenever it pleases him, he comes to light in his actual revelation, as the *Hidden-One*.

Now it is clear that Barth's view of Scripture differs radically from the confessions of the Christian Church. The reason for Barth's divergence lies, in our opinion, in his philosophical treatment of the concept of revelation. Barth is completely captured by the majestic loftiness of the triune God. The unending qualitative distinction between God, the Wholly Other, and paltry, sinful creatures is strongly emphasized by Barth. He repeatedly stresses the Word of the Preacher, God is in heaven and thou art on the earth. Each similarity, each analogy between God and ourselves breaks down. And even rev-

elation cannot bridge this gulf. God certainly speaks, but his Words remain his secret; and what we record is not God's Word but is even in contradiction to God's Word. Revelation is described from this perspective. Barth does not humbly ask whether God himself has given a bridging-the-gulf character to his revelation. The situation is rather approached from the point of view of a previously accepted framework.

Every Christian recognizes a real distinction between God and ourselves. The incomprehensibility of God is clearly taught in Scripture and is beyond dispute.

God's majesty and greatness is beyond our understanding. The finite can never comprehend the infinite. God is infinitely exalted above our imaginations and thoughts. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and his ways higher than our ways. No creature penetrates the unapproachable light in which he dwells. And the words from Vondel's chorus take hold of our hearts:

"Forgive us, thou, whom neither living nor lifeless creature fully can extol, escaping grasp of speech, now and forever, forgive, and do not charge to our account that no expression, word nor symbol, can utter thee . . . Who can e'er call thee by thy name? Who serve as high priest in thy oracle? Yea, who dare boast?"

But still he has revealed himself to us full of grace and truth, and by this self-disclosure — and that is the adorable wonder for which we can never thank him enough — God has accomplished what for us is and remains a total impossibility: he has expressed divine realities in human words.

He, whose wisdom is immeasurable and unsearchable, has himself created the standard, the form, the figure, the expression in our language and sound, in which he would witness of himself and of his divine works. He *stammers* with us, says Calvin repeatedly, as a *nurse-maid* with a child. And yet, in the language of a fallen and tarnished world, in the limited vocabulary of a particular people, in a historical *milieu* with all of the limitations connected with it, God spoke to certain people and in speaking to them, he speaks to us.

No one ventures to call this self-revelation of God entirely adequate, so that it exhausts and fully delineates the divine glory and mystery. However, as over against Barth and his followers, we maintain that it is most assuredly pure and true. For this reason, the true God remains our surety, and does not deceive or mislead us.

If we had to give names to God of ourselves the matter would be hopeless, for we could never trust ourselves, since the absolute antith-

esis between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the fallen creature and the Holy Creator makes every approach from our side impossible. Then the words from Vondel's chorus, which we reject, would be true:

"The knowledge of angels, utterances, unable and weak,  
is but desecration and blasphemy."

But now that God has taken the initiative himself, everything changes! We leave it confidently to him, the all-wise and almighty One, to express the inexpressible, to name the unnamable, to say in human language super-human things. Whoever considers this impossible gravely sins and makes himself guilty of severe ingratitude. No, it is much stronger; it is nothing less than conceit and unlimited creaturely delusion. As if any human being could ever dictate to God the limit of what is possible for him! Our task is to accept gratefully his revelation.

We certainly do not forget that it is communicated in human form and that it is never adequate. We know very well that if God spoke to us about himself in an adequate and divine way, no creature would understand it. We constantly bear in mind that everything is much greater and more stupendous than is reported to us in his revelation. As we walk through this wonderland of God's revelation, it seems that we are like the inhabitant of an island who, at the end of every walk, finds himself at the sea — but we walk with holy admiration and silent worship. We do not doubt for a moment the utmost wisdom of the Holy Spirit, who, as the perfect pedagogue, leads us in all truth and has so phrased everything that we as his pupils understand it and can take it to heart. He would certainly be a poor teacher if his teaching were not understood by us and his message not comprehended.

Therefore, Barth leaves us cold with his philosophical speculations concerning the immeasurable distance between God and ourselves and with his constant emphasis upon the qualitative distinction which none of us deny. And the dialectical game with the words "reveal" and "conceal" makes an impression only upon him whose eyes are closed to the great wonder of God's revelation. It is absurd, even an insult to God, the Holy Spirit, when Barth claims that the figure in which God's Word is given to us does not agree with the subject matter but even contradicts it.

Here lies the unbridgeable gap between Barth and ourselves.

We hold to the powerful words: No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he has *declared* him. Here in this world, in human language, not in riddles

but intelligibly and transparently, the Son has spoken of his Father. He has disclosed to us the heart of his Father. He in whom the divinity bodily dwells has brought to light the mysterious possibility of speaking about him whom no one has ever seen. That is his business — and it is an adorable mystery.

Now that he has spoken, all neo-platonic speculation concerning the unnamable, and all insistence upon absolute silence, have lost their motive and meaning.

We make no desperate and absurd attempts to penetrate behind the clear, human words of Christ, which we understand, even though they point to the greatest mysteries; we make no such attempts to penetrate from behind these words of Christ to divinely accordant interpretations of God's secrets. We respect the bounds; we rebel no more against the limitations of the creature, for we hear the Savior saying, "This is eternal life that they know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

In him, we have the truth, the light and the life!

And on the basis of this grateful recognition of God's wonderful deeds, the question must be considered as to what relationship the Bible now has to the revelation of God. It is here that we are diametrically opposed to Barth.

The close connection between Barth's view concerning revelation and his standpoint on Scripture is unmistakable. The same scheme in which he molds God's revelation governs also his view of Scripture. The Bible is for him nothing more than a fallible and errant witness of revelation. Only through the free, sovereign and actual intervention of God does Scripture become constantly anew an organ of the Spirit through which then God's Word sounds forth right across errant human words.

But, the fact that important parts of Holy Scripture are not publications of the revelations of God which have *taken place* prior to their inscripturation does not support Barth's view. In many places, revelation and the record coincide. This applies without exception to all the epistles of the New Testament. They reveal that which was not previously provided. The same is true of many other sections. Certain songs in the Old Testament as Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, I Samuel 2, many Psalms and Proverbs, the books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs are direct revelations of God. Barth must himself acknowledge that Paul does not view himself as a fallible witness of divine mercies, but as one who is empowered and taught by the Holy Spirit to speak in a fitting way of these divine matters. Paul never gives the impression that his speaking and writing conceal the true sub-

stance and that his epistles are in absolute contradiction to the Word of God. To characterize Scripture as only a witness to revelation is in conflict with Scripture's witness to itself.

Our main objection, however, against Barth's speculations concerning Scripture is his denial of the infallible inbreathing of the Scripture by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not an historical document in which witnesses of revelation, in a fallible and constantly erring manner, name the unnamable in words which conceal and contradict the true Word of God. In Scripture God himself has taken care of the written recording of his Word. The marvel of his revelation here persists. God employs men driven by the Holy Spirit to record his Word in an infallible way. No one denies that the Biblical writers, whom the Holy Spirit used as his instruments, were in themselves fallible and erring men, as the blind in Jesus' day were really blind, the lame really lame, and the hungry, hungry. But as the blind, after Jesus' wonderful intervention, see, and the lame, walk, and the hungry are filled, so the Holy Spirit performs the wonder that the Biblical writers present God's revelation in an infallible way. The Scripture itself bears testimony to this in a number of places, which need not here be proven. In the dogmatics of Bavinck, Honig and Kuyper, this is sufficiently demonstrated from Scripture itself. Thus, God's Word presents itself to us. This is no scheme which we impose on Scripture but a simple acceptance of the, "It is written," before which Christ himself bowed. And the ample evidence of Scripture is in no way refuted by Barth's observations.

The infallible incription of the revelation of God is, therefore, even for Christ's church, no impoverishment, no arrogant attempt of sinful creatures to stabilize God's revelation, no intrusion into what always remains at God's disposal, free, and sovereign. The Christian church has always treasured God's special care for our salvation, because He has thus strengthened weak consciences and analyzed and determined doctrine more clearly and more extensively. God has — to give a few quotations from Calvin — first spoken through hidden revelation to the patriarchs who then passed on orally what they had received to their descendants. Thereafter, it pleased God to provide a more glorious form for his church, and he willed that his Word should be placed on record so that the priests would take out of it what they should pass on to the people and that every teaching presented should be tested according to his rule. Then came the prophets. Here also God commanded that their prophecies be placed on record and be considered as part of his Word because it pleased the Lord that the teaching be clearer and more extensive in order that weak

consciences be all the more strengthened. Next came the historical books, which were composed under dictation of the Holy Spirit; beside the historical books, the Psalms were finally added, *on a par* with the prophets. Thus, is assembled the whole body, the law, prophets, psalms and histories, the standard according to which the priests and teachers had to adjust their doctrine until Christ's coming. They might turn aside from it neither to the right nor to the left. Their whole office was restricted within these limits so that they could answer the people from the very mouth of God.

Even the apostles are under the same law. They might interpret the old Scripture in no other way than that which was from the Lord, that is, from the spirit of Christ, which went before and, as it were, dictated the words. And this applies not only to their speaking but also to their recording of the gospel. They were thereby the sure and authentic servants, the pledged notaries of the Spirit, so that their declarations consequently had to be regarded as God's Word. Even the language and style of the writers was thereby arranged by the Spirit. Because of the obtuseness of man the Spirit usually employed the most simple way of speaking; he stammers with us not unlike a nurse-maid. Thus the Bible is of God, spoken by the mouth of God himself and so descended from heaven as if the living voice of God were heard in it. And we have to cultivate the same respect for it that we owe to God because only from him does it issue to us, and it is unadulterated with anything human. (See Inst. IV, VIII 6-9)

This is the unanimous witness of the Christian church and we subscribe to it without any restriction. Let it then be, as Prof. Kraemer has said at one of our ministerial conferences, that we do not have the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in our bones. We have never seen these centuries as a boom-time and we are thankful that we have not been carried away in the stream of relativism. We rather agree with Paul, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. Or let us say it in a better and more accurate way: through God's grace, we always see Scripture, just as Christ, as it appears from His many expressions, has revered and maintained God's revelation in it.

Consequently, for us there exists no distance between God's Word and Scripture, which again and again must be overcome and exalted through a wonderful intervention of God. What is true of God's Word is true of Scripture. In a sermon on II Timothy 3 : 16 Calvin warned the congregation not to understand by the Word of the Lord anything else but the Bible. Where, he asks, shall men find the Word of God if they do not seek it in the law, the prophets and the gospel? For God has there declared unto us his will. Therefore Paul here emphat-

ically affirms — in order to remove entirely every counter-plea and every excuse, by excluding the assertion that they will recognize the Word of God without accepting Holy Scripture — whoever will give God the honor and will show himself to be subject to him must accept everything written in the law and the prophets. The apostle says that the entire Holy Scripture has that majesty of which he speaks. Without exception, men have to bind themselves to everything in Scripture because God has spoken in his law and through his prophets. (LIV, 283, 284). And in his exposition of I Peter 1: 25, Calvin says that the apostle declares that the Word of the Lord, which makes us living, is identical with the law, the prophets and the gospel. It has here nothing to do with the Word which lies enclosed within God's own bosom but rather the concern is with the Word that has come unto us and, therefore, this Word of the apostles and prophets must be regarded as God's Word (LV, 230). Both are inadequate. Both have been given to us in human form and sound. But they are both pure and true. A cup of sea water, says Augustine, is still real sea-water even though the ocean is not exhausted with it. And just because it is given to us, through divine wisdom and condescending goodness, in our own language and in our own world of thought, this spoken and written Word of God is also clear. The things revealed are for us and for our children forever (Dent. 29: 29). Therefore, Moses can rightly say — and Paul applies the same to the gospel in Romans 10 : 6 — "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deutoronomy 30 : 11-14). It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalm 119: 105), a light that shineth in a dark place (II Pet. 1 : 19).

The observations of Barth concerning Scripture stand in flagrant opposition to what the poet in Psalm 19 witnesses in a song of praise about God's law, statutes, commandment and judgments, that they are perfect, sure and dependable, right and pure, clean and true (vss. 8-10). And what Paul says in I Corinthians 13 : 12 concerning the seeing in a mirror darkly does not in the least conflict with this. Calvin rightly says that Paul does not speak of seeing enigmatically (darkly) so that God's revelation in his Word and sacraments are doubtful and deceitful, but rather that our knowledge is less lucid

than in heaven, where we shall no longer walk by faith. The knowledge of God, which we now have from his Word, is certainly sure and true, it is in no respect confused, ambiguous or dark, but by way of comparison, it is called enigmatic because it stands far from the manifestation for which we wait, because we shall then see face to face (XLIX, 514).

Barth posits a distance, a gulf, between God's Word and Scripture and his whole system rests upon the assumption of the human impossibility and yet the divine possibility to bridge this gulf.

As, Christians, witnesses of revelation, prophets, apostles and martyrs, we stand, according to Barth, on this side of the gulf. As we pray and sing in the church, as we make our confession or give catechetical instruction, as we teach theology, we all stand under an iron law. We speak of God with the intention that others will hear of him. This attempt and this intention is as such impossible. God does not belong to the world and thus not to the realm for which we have words and through which we can draw the attention of others. Man can not speak of God because God is not a thing, neither natural nor spiritual. Should we speak of him, then it is just of him that we do not speak. We cannot do what we should like to do and we cannot attain what we should like to attain. That is the iron law under which we are trapped. It is not that we do it with defect. That is for Barth much too feebly expressed. Here is no defect, but death. Here is no difficulty but actual impossibility. Here there is not an imperfect occurrence: there is no occurrence at all.

One should say that if this is the situation with regard to our confession in church, our witness, our singing and speaking, then we should all be still. Each analogy, each similitude falls short.

Barth does say that God if he would speak to us must clothe everything in human form, but the fatal error is that all likeness and similarity is lacking, and everything stands in opposition and in contradiction with the real Word of God. The prophets and apostles speak through means of Scripture as mistaken men who err in every word. They speak erroneously, not in the least of God, so that it is God, and only God, who speaks and hears his own Word.

Thus, all along the line, the sinful perversity of all human activities is applied with extreme consistency, even to the speaking of the witnesses of revelation.

And nevertheless, the gulf is overbridged!

Never from our side. That is now unmistakably clear. Death reigns with us.

But from God's side! Free and sovereign, at any moment that it pleases God. He can use anything toward that end. He can speak to us through Russian communism, through a concert of flutes, through a blooming bush or through a dead dog. But he powerfully and without restraint uses Scripture for that purpose. Right across the faulty, erring words of Scripture, which lack any agreement with the substance of the matter, the Holy Spirit speaks his Word.

Barth really had to come to this "actualistic" conception of revelation, if any mention of revelation were still to be made. He has broken down all bridges and done away with each analogy. We have nothing but darkness, error and sin. The Bible is a human book full of errors and contradictions. It opposes God's Word in every way. We cannot say a word about God which is correct.

And now if there is still to be revelation, this nihilism must be overcome constantly anew, in an incomprehensible way, in repeated divine acts through God's wonderful intervention. Barth does not *see* this as a necessary postulate, as a dialectical game which delivers him from an impasse. He does not want to prove this. It is a reality which is indeed received in faith. It comes over us in the moment of the divine act of revelation, and it passes by again. We hope in it and remember it and between hoping and remembering, it lies as a reality beyond reach, not to be fixed.

For our part we consider Barth's view as pure fiction. We find nothing of it in the Bible, and therefore in no respect do we believe in this "miracle"; we do not believe in a "miracle" through which God gives us knowledge of himself by means of erring human words, by means of words which fall short of every resemblance of the knowledge of God. And then especially in a point of time immediately thereafter, even as we meditate upon it, it is gone. Whoever denies the real wonder, that God Himself speaks to us in human words objectively pure and true, and infallibly in Scripture, and whoever stigmatizes every analogy as a discovery of the devil, can not allow any bridge to be laid, even from God's side. How shall we, who even in faith are but darkness, have any knowledge of this divine intervention?

It seems an ingenious move to give historical criticism free rein with Scripture and nevertheless plainly to say to all critics that it is only on their knees and that it is only through grace by virtue of divine sovereignty that they can receive the wonder of God's speaking and then forget all criticism, even though it is vindicated — but this price is too costly. Real revelation is not afforded where every resemblance between God's Word and Scripture fails.

We know that although Barth is caught in his pre-arranged scheme and although the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are in his bones, nevertheless, he has experienced the majestic and all-subduing power of God's Word and again and again has been gripped by it. God, in his Word that does not return void, has spoken to his soul. In Barth's scheme it is impossible. He has felt the criticism of the Scriptures in all of his schooling. And still — and still the Word has been too mighty for him. It does not let him go. He must speak about it. And in a dialectical way, all sorts of difficulties are solved, or rather apparently worked away, in order to give free opportunity to the free Word of God.

For this reason, the critic of his system, (which does not intend to be a system) must not first of all take the many expressions in which this revelation of God, even the revelation in Scripture is said to be a revelation in which God's speaking is heard and understood only by God, and is thus an illusion — the opposite of revelation. We would sooner say to him and to all Barthians, who with him have heard God's voice in the Bible: Let all your philosophical schemes sail away and take into account the real wonder in which God himself makes us hear his divine thoughts, not adequately but, nevertheless purely and truly, in human language and sound.

Barth is mistaken when he accuses us of believing that Scripture is at the arbitrary disposal of man. Let us make this clear with an example. The Bible opens with the powerful words: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This revelation of God is here stabilized by his own appointment. This announcement of God, which contains tremendous consequences for the life of every creature, e.g., absolute dependence and summons to service, goes out to millions of people. They open the Bible, and read a proclamation of God respecting his sovereign right over their lives. Through the present working of the Holy Ghost, God appeals in this text, in which his revelation is firmly fixed, to everyone's conscience. We who are radically evil in nature, cast away God's sovereign claim. We do not want God to be King over us. It is only a gracious, free gift of God that the situation changes us. In faith, which moment by moment must be upheld by the Holy Ghost, the text becomes for us a precious truth. Through the Spirit, the verse is translated into practical experience, as Luther has done in an unforgettable way in his great catechism. Thus, disposal over God's revelation is not to be believed for a minute.

### III. BARTH'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Our exposition and criticism of Barth's doctrine of predestination bring to mind the words of W. Cunningham (motto for our dissertation):

"In this theology there is, of course, no room for originality properly so called, for its whole materials are contained in the actual statements of God's word; and he is the greatest and best theologian, who has most accurately apprehended the meaning of the statements of Scripture — who by comparing and combining them, has most fully and correctly brought out the whole mind of God on all the topics on which the Scriptures give us information."

And as our admiration of Barth's genius and originality increased we were continually reminded of these words as we repeatedly read the monumental volume of Church Dogmatics which deals with election. Barth undoubtedly deserves the honor of being the first theologian among many able to write with such intense interest and devotion on this tremendous truth.

Outside of the maligned group of neo-Calvinists this ability is lacking in all reputable theologians in the entire nineteenth century, since their view of God precluded the recognition of this awe-inspiring reality. The fearful reverence for him who dwells in darkness and is responsible to no one for his incomprehensible deeds was utterly missing. Their image of God was completely humanized. People generally spoke about God's love without having known the trembling before his wrath.

The shock and terror with which all the great men of God among Israel were overcome as soon as they were aware of God's presence became an unknown reality. Theology became a tender-hearted occupation in which man could accept nothing of the fact that God created all things for his glory, and that the day of wrath was reserved for the wicked.

Their judgment concerning predestination, therefore, was prejudiced in every way. As caught in a trap, men in their own speculations reproached as speculation the views of Calvin and the fathers of Dordt, who would pass on unabridged, God's revelation in Scripture. A few nineteenth century theologians spoke of an eternal election in which everything savored of the love of God which eternally moved him. But all that went beyond this idea was disqualified as a fatalism as ruinous to true religion as the plague, and the placing of reprobation next to election was thought to destroy all ethical inclinations in God's love, since such a doctrine led in its consequences to a complete

disappearance of all ethics; it presupposed a concept of God which, out of a speculative delight, lowered the merciful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to a selfish and capricious despot who is sooner worthy of contempt than adoration.

That the greatest theologians of Christianity, e.g., Augustine, Luther and Calvin confessed this truth might have taught nineteenth century theologians humility. But the atmosphere was unfavorable to such modesty. The pious Netherlands attacked Abraham Kuyper when he had the brutality to publish articles on particular grace.

No wonder that we took delight in the fact that yonder in Switzerland a man has appeared in whose life the experience of the pious in the Old Testament has become flesh and blood. Though Barth would be the last to dwell upon his own religious life, nevertheless, everyone who reads between the lines feels that God — the living God, who is a consuming fire — has met him. Barth complains that many theologians have never been cast into frightful temptations and have never trembled before the majesty of God. Barth finds it necessary to treat these divine mysteries which are revealed to us. He is perfectly at home in the writings of Calvin, Luther and the fathers of *Dordt*. And he has wrestled with their confession. In the foreword of the third volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, in which he devotes more than five-hundred pages to predestination, Barth regrets that he must depart much further than in preceding volumes from the fields of theological tradition handed down by Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. But his departure does not proceed for one moment from the same kind of motivation as that of the nineteenth century. Barth is constrained solely by obedience to the revelation of Scripture. With Barth there is nothing of the pride so characteristic of the majority of nineteenth century theologians and we excitedly listen, with the opened Bible before us.

We shall now give a point by point exposition and discussion of his profound observations.

1. Barth immediately posits the foundation of all of his entire dogmatics: *Everything which God says about Himself and which we have to say about God, is anchored in the name of Jesus Christ. With Christ we must begin and with him we must end and outside of him there is no kind of knowledge about God.* This position is usually called his Christomonistic principle (Christ alone) or incarnational principle (the restriction of revelation to the incarnation, the becoming flesh). And it is this basic principle that governs Barth's view of predestination. The ruling voice through which we are instructed about

God by God (The deity of Christ is confessed without curtailment by Barth) is Jesus Christ alone. The revelation of the Old and New Testaments merely witness to this name. The fulness of God does not precede or follow the name of Christ but begins with it, proceeds with it, and comes with it to its goal. God has placed himself in relation to Christ; (in a free dispensation of his love). Jesus Christ is God, as he turns himself to mankind, or still better, God as he turns himself to the elect of every nation, represented in the one man, Jesus of Nazareth. God is known only in this relation. The real God is no abstraction but is what he is only in his fellowship with Christ, and, in Christ, to the elect. The partner of God, without whom God cannot be conceived, is Jesus Christ and his elect. For the sake of Christ, man and the world provide the background of redemptive history. The doctrine of predestination can be correctly understood in a Biblical sense only against this background.

These meaningful passages must be read, re-read, and seriously considered and weighed. They constitute the key to the whole theological position of Barth. Whatever else may change Barth remains true to his basic Christomonistic position and he models every doctrine according to this basic conviction. The word "models" has been consciously selected. Barth differs radically from Calvin. The latter flatly refuses to subject the dogmas of the Christian religion to a particular scheme — something which his followers soon forgot. Calvin always begins with the question as to what data Scripture offers concerning the subject at hand. He never infers one dogma from another. The deep *consciousness* that God's revelation is the revelation of God restrains him from every *a priori* construction. Barth does not read carefully and painstakingly all Biblical data respecting predestination in order to draw a conclusion. All data is from the start set under his Christomonistic scheme. The merits or pitfalls of Barth's procedure require a closer examination.

2. Barth extensively discusses supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism, and he fully understands the religious motives behind these views. Barth acknowledges that the Calvinistic motive of the free grace of God and the sovereignty of God (which remains free in his manifestation of grace) are to be upheld. However, he discovers four suppositions in these positions which must be rejected unconditionally.

In the first place both supralapsarians and infralapsarians consider elect and damned individuals to be the object of divine foreordination. Jesus Christ plays the role with the elect, but the real interest is not

directed to him but to elected individuals. Whether the object of predestination is man, yet to be created, or man already fallen, man and not Christ is in the center.

Secondly, the predestination of these individuals means the establishment of a stable system. The concern is no longer with the cheerful message of grace but with a neutral communication of being elected and damned. Individuals are caught in a scheme and must walk in this system. Supralapsarians consider this system as the one and all. Everything is reduced to the archetypal plan of God to reveal himself in the virtues of mercy and righteousness. Infralapsarians also emphasize a plan of creation and the fall. Both posit, however, an invariable system to which God himself is bound, after he has established it.

In the third place here God says "yes" and "no" with equal emphasis, in a perfect balance. Election and reprobation are completely coordinated. God's glory is just as great in his mercy with respect to the elect, as in his righteousness respecting the damned.

And finally, the good pleasure of God is understood as an absolute decree, as a decision of God's free power, entirely free and independent of Jesus Christ. In the background God stands alone and not in Jesus Christ.

Against these four suppositions Barth rebels with all his might. He views them as merely abstract reflections and not spiritual revelation. Supralapsarianism makes a good start and shows a consistently believing attitude but it proceeds much too abstractly. Infralapsarianism, taken back at the consequences of supralapsarianism, covered up the questions raised and could only fall under the criticism of the Enlightenment.

Barth wishes to present a purified supralapsarianism. From eternity God desires communion with the man, Jesus Christ, and in him with all men. In Christ God wishes to reveal all the treasures of his love. This chosen man must reveal what God is, what God wills, and what God is not, and what he does not will. It is not God's will that this man should fall and sin. God wills rather that sin, which God does not desire, will be opposed and conquered by this man. God's chosen man must be confronted with evil, the non-divine. Evil in itself is stronger than powerless man, but this chosen man, united with God's son, will gain the victory, through God's grace, in death and resurrection. Thus in his conquest of sin and death Jesus Christ is the representative of the divine affirmation and also of the divine negation.

God knows that as soon as he reveals himself and throws his light

in the darkness outside of himself, this light necessarily casts a shadow. In this self-disclosure within the arena of creation there inevitably shall be summoned un what God does not will: sin, the devil, and evil. The fall of man witnesses to this fact. Man in himself and as such, when confronted with Satan and his kingdom, does not have the power, in his creaturely freedom, to cast away what God casts away, in his divine freedom. Man chooses what God does not will.

But this is precisely the wonder: God takes the risk himself. God himself takes the curse and the damnation upon himself in his elected man and conquers it. In his eternal council God takes upon himself danger, and distress by which the creature is deluded, though not outside of his will. God takes upon himself the responsibility of creation and the fall of man. He bears it and triumphs over it through the chosen man, Jesus Christ.

Barth calls this his purified supralapsarianism, in which he finds three great advantages. Here we do not encounter a selfish God but a God who loves man constantly. Here our concern is not with individuals and their selfishness but with the elected one, Jesus Christ, and in him all blessedness dwells. Here no diabolical God appears who destines a portion of his creation to be under the dominion of evil. Everything is rather concerned with the rejection of and absolute victory over evil. And yet the great Calvinistic motif of the sovereignty of God is still maintained.

We can whole-heartedly subscribe to much of what Barth brings up against the old supra- and infralapsarianism. Calvin already regarded this working with God's decrees more as philosophy than theology. But what Barth puts in its place must be inexorably rejected. We do believe that God clearly sees the unity of his council, which cannot be disturbed by the entrance of sin, and is perfectly righteous and holy in everything that happens. But every attempt on our part, as insignificant little men, to see and to comprehend this unity, and to explain it meaningfully, transcends our ability and power. This is a work of divine dimension and measurement, and these profundities of divine wisdom are not disclosed to us. Whoever tries to search the unsearchable slips into an abysmal pit. With confidence we leave this to him whom we have learned to know in Christ, and we say with Augustine: Man, consider who God is and who thou art!

As in so many previous instances the price which Barth must pay for *conceptual unity* is too costly. He arrives at totally unscriptural speculations. That God's self-disclosure in time and space necessarily arouses, next to his light, the shadow of the non-divine and of evil, that God's speaking cannot be without his silence, his "yes" not without

his "no," his creation not without the entrance of the devil and of evil, that man in paradise inexorably had to yield to the power of evil, is without foundation in Biblical revelation. Such notions are simply Barth's own conceptions, and extremely dangerous conceptions. through which the feeling of guilt, responsibility, and sin are undermined. Barth does not want these consequences. He openly warns against them. But, he sets these dangers astir and can offer no resistance. The threat of antinomianism is here at once acute. It avenges itself in that Barth cannot conceive of a state of righteousness or of a paradisiacal beginning. With Adam there was no yielding because of an inability to withstand the power of the devil. Adam's disobedience was the result of wilful disobedience and apostasy. And nowhere in the Bible is Barth's conception of unity even suggested.

3. Barth repeatedly opposes what he calls the absolute decree of God, in which particular persons are elected and others damned. The fundamental error of this confession of Augustine and Calvin is that men view God abstractly, apart from and outside of Christ. Consequently Barth speaks of an absolute that is a literal, *isolated* decree. God is seen as the highest sovereign, who in election and reprobation, totally outside of Christ, majestically exercises control over men and discriminates between them for righteous but impenetrable reasons.

The electing God is absolutely hidden and not a revealed God. God and Christ are torn apart from each other. To say that the electing God is a sovereign and supreme being who governs his creatures with free and unlimited power is to speak of an unknown quantity. We know God only in Christ. And, on the other hand, to say that one of the elect is a man whom God's eternal good pleasure has chosen, is also to speak of a God who for us is an unknown quantity.

Such a view destroys all certainty. Those unfortunates who hear of this absolute decree take refuge in mysticism or ethics in order to gain some certainty and thereby fall into a self-appointed salvation, a righteousness of works and idolatry. Whoever confesses this absolute decree allows God's choice to be determined by something other than love. Here men long after the decision of God's will in Christ but they necessarily grasp the empty depths of Satan. This doctrine summons up abysmal uncertainty, despair and doubt and makes it understandable that Milton once exclaimed: "Let me go to hell but such a God shall never command my respect!" Men can certainly point to Christ from pastoral motives, as the *mirror* of election, but the fearful question as to whether we really belong to this restricted, elected group is not thereby suppressed. In short, what

stands in Ephesians 1 : 4, that we are elected in Christ, is ignored here.

For the present we can only observe that every doctrine of election which does not give full validity to being chosen in Christ is not according to Scripture. Furthermore, we fully acknowledge that the coordination of election and reprobation, as two equivalent parts of the one decree of God, is certainly not in accord with the revelation of God.

4. Over against this so-called absolute decree of God, Barth posits the concrete decision in which God has chosen from eternity the man Jesus and every nation of men, represented in him. It becomes possible — and Barth considers this a complete deliverance — to see divine predestination, as the *sum-total of the gospel*. The situation is changed for Barth. God, in free grace, has destined himself for sinful man, and sinful man for himself. In this, God takes upon himself the reprobation of man, with all of its effects, and, God chooses man to participate in his glory. There is only a revealed decision consisting of two parts, election and reprobation. In Christ God takes damnation upon himself. And, in Christ election is made valid, and in him every nation is elected. Jesus Christ stands therefore at the beginning of the ways and works of God. Whenever God turns to the creature, he encounters before everything else, the pre-existent God-Man, Jesus Christ. The Word in John 1 1, 2, is Jesus Christ and this was in the beginning, that is, at the beginning of all things, with God. He is God's choice and the decree concerning everyone is made in him. In this way Christ is at the same time *subject* and *object* of this choice. Jesus Christ, with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, is first of all the electing God. There is no abstract God who decrees apart from Christ. Christ reveals to us our election as the election which is brought to completion through himself, through His will, as the will of God. And, at the same time, Christ is the object of election, as the chosen man. In overflowing love, God places the Other next himself; Jesus Christ stands at the beginning of the ways and works of God, as the first-born of the whole creation, in whom for the first time it is seen what God's grace is. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in a prominent sense the grace that God in Christ takes upon himself is *problematic* of his creation, yes, the wrath, the curse and the casting away. Christ alone is the damned one and blessedness is chosen for us in him. Therefore, we have no right to conceive of the election of God as a choice to the right and to the left. There is certainly a choice to the left, but God has chosen himself as its ob-

ject. God's love is overflowing love; his predestination is not a strange mixture of salvation and perdition but it is a pure gospel.

Barth's doctrine of predestination stands or falls with the supposition that Jesus Christ is the subject and object of election. But, in Scripture we do not read that Jesus is the subject of election. Not even in John 1 : 1, 2. This does refer to Jesus Christ but in this portion of Scripture he is portrayed in his divine majesty and glory. The apostle wants to show who the word is that has become flesh in the fulness of time. Barth's exegesis is without support. "In the beginning" does not refer to a process, which here commences, but it excludes every coming into existence at the beginning. Jesus Christ therefore does not stand as the pre-existent God-Man at the beginning of all God's ways and works. If Barth means that Christ actually already existed then Brunner is right that this idea of a pre-existent God-Man is neither found in the Bible, nor was it ever formulated by any theologian; it is nothing other than Barth's own construction, for it is in this way alone that Jesus Christ, as the only elected one, could be sustained. And if Christ is the first one in God's predestination, then there is a conflict with the revelation of Scripture which relates the coming of Christ in the flesh to sin alone. Calvin says against such speculations that Scripture calls Christ the second Adam. Furthermore, Christ is delineated no-where in the Bible as the only Elected One or as the only Damned One.

5. According to Barth, the classic doctrine of predestination viewed God's foreordination as firmly established ordination so that it could not be changed even by God, himself. The concept of decree implied a statute which henceforth was unchangeably established. God has chosen once and does not choose anymore. The vivacity of his deeds is an eternal past. For the present the vivacity of God's deeds consists only in the execution of this unchangeable ordinance. God has determined everything and does not determine anymore.

And such a non-actual, inflexible God cannot be an object of faith.

In opposition Barth sets forth a doctrine of *actual* predestination. Barth does not want to overlook the concept of a decree which speaks of the constancy, faithfulness and absoluteness of the free love and choice of God. God is in fact unchanged in his choice and unchangeably the one who he is. God takes upon himself an undertaking, an obligation. Whoever does not acknowledge this falls into the doctrine of absolute arbitrariness, as was propounded in the Middle Ages by Duns Scotus. The decree of God is nevertheless full of life and actuality. It is an eternal present perfect *tense*, harder than steel and

granite, but because it is here concerned with the life of God, it is also present and future. God's eternity not only comes before but it accompanies time supratemporally and it outlives time as a post-temporal eternity. God's predestination is therefore unchanged and unchangeable God's dealings eternal occurrences which are not closed and immovable. Predestination occurs eternally in time, in the calling and direction of the believers, of Israel and of the church and, though hidden from us, of the history of the world. God is never caught in his own predestination. He always stays free. He has not decided but always continues deciding so that there is no election that cannot become reprobation and no reprobation that cannot become election. God has not predestined men but he predestinates them from moment to moment. This is no decree from before the foundation of the world.

When Barth raises the question as to what the decree of predestination is, he explains without mincing matters that it is not a determination of the definitive lot of the creatures but rather of the definitive character of God's will. The decree, the predestination, is no abstract, absolute decision concerning men, but uniquely and only that God want an alliance with the man, Jesus Christ, and in him with the nations of men. Predestination is not abstract but concrete. It is not bare disposal of God's will, and nothing more, but it is an alliance full of life and actuality.

God's ordinance is thus not the eternal destiny of his creatures' blessedness or misery, but it constitutes the starting-point of his dealings in Christ: that he will be a God of reprobation in Christ, and so a God of election in Christ.

The absolute decree of the old doctrine of predestination is a lifeless, eternal rule of temporal life. The actual predestination of Christ presents him as the living Lord of temporal life. Everything here is actual, living, and yet the sovereignty of God is not an *arbitrary act of the will*, but it is clearly and concretely determined in Christ.

We take the liberty here to present a few side-remarks. First of all, Barth does not do justice to Augustine's and Calvin's conception of the decree of God. His criticism is completely justified with respect to many followers who deal with God's decrees as naked decisions of his will. Augustine and Calvin, however, maintain, in the light of the scriptural doctrine of God's decrees, that God acts in the fulness of his divine virtues and perfections. His sovereign independence of all things and men, his unchangeableness as over against all the changeable here below, his knowledge which is increased by nothing here on earth, his love which is not awakened in time, are all revealed

therein. In opposition to all docetism and deism, God is thus related to everything without endangering his unchangeableness, without his will and disposition being modified, and without in any sense becoming dependent upon the decisions of the creature. The Lord wills nothing new but everything that he wills, he wills eternally and unchangeably with the full energy of his divine omnipotence. The Lord knows nothing new out of the course of history but he follows it with the eternal, unchangeable interest of his divine wisdom. The Lord has no *new* love but his eternal, unbegun love is just the sure guarantee that in time he shall remain loving us. In this way, the counsel of the Lord spans the full reality. It is never a bare determination of the will in the abstract which lies hovering over someone or something, as does fate. Everything, cause and effect, condition and fulfilment, means and end, prayer and hardening, curse and blessing all lie as bound up in God's hand in the fulness of life. Everything is so included and established in God's council that our thinking, willing, and responsibility are not denatured for a moment. Judas was not predestined to the betrayal of Jesus, to the exclusion of his own responsibility, much sooner to the inclusion of Christ's association and prayers, warnings and appeals. The old, genuine doctrine of predestination possesses an actuality which does not detract from God his invariableness and sovereignty, nor from man his full responsibility. With Barth's actual predestination this three-fold richness (God remains God to the full; he is unchangeably related to everything; his council spans the entire reality) is lost and is exchanged for an actuality which subjects God himself to changeableness. And it is absurd to aver that God otherwise is the captive of his own decrees. He wills unchangeably. He wills himself. And the Barthian objection makes us think of the Spiritualists of the days of the Reformation who considered it an insult to the Holy Ghost that he should be bound to the letter of the Holy Scripture. What Calvin brings up against them must be addressed to Barth as well: "As if it should be dishonoring to the Holy Ghost (in Barth's case i.e., God) that he remains everywhere the same and is in agreement with himself, constantly steadfast in everything and free from every change" (I, IX, 2).

What the Holy Spirit communicates to us about God's council is narrowed and restricted by Barth — his Christomonistic conception of revelation governs everything again — to the one determination of God respecting Jesus Christ. However, just as according to Barth the actual character of predestination in Christ is not threatened by the eternal determination of God, which is as unwavering as granite, so according to Scripture the actual character of God's predestination

is not threatened by the council of God which concerns all things. If by willing the alliance with man eternally and unchangeably in Christ, God escapes being captive of his own decree, this is equally true of the Biblical doctrine of predestination, which nowhere limits this decree to the one determination.

6. Barth justly permits the election of the body of Christians to precede the election of individuals, although he unjustly reproaches the traditional doctrine of predestination for overlooking this. I only need, however, to point to Sunday 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism where it is first confessed that Christ has elected his church to eternal life, and afterwards it is said that I am a living member thereof, and shall so remain eternally. It is worth noting the way in which Barth works this out. The gracious election of Christ is at the same time the eternal election of the people of God, who by their existence confess Jesus Christ to the whole world and call the latter to repentance. The people of God bear witness to the judgment, and as the church they disclose the divine mercy. In their form as Israel they are appointed to hear; in their form as the church, to believe the promise coming to men. Israel represents the disappearing form of the one congregation of God; the Church represents the future form of the one congregation of God. God's predestination is double, judgment for God and mercy for man. The one people of God must interpret this double direction of God's will. Israel preaches the opposition, the unworthiness before God's election, the divine judgment which God took upon himself in Christ. The church learns its origin from Israel.

The church, which has its origin from Jew and gentile, represents God's mercy. She is Israel's destiny, walking in light. Men may thus not count the Jews as the condemned, and the church as the chosen people of God, but both in their oneness are the object of the election of God. Even Israel of today cannot escape God's election. Lying under the shadow of the cross and under the curse, **she** must, nevertheless, actually testify to Jesus Christ. Israel can still not change what God has done in Jesus Christ, for the good of men and also for Israel. The Jews cannot undo the fact that Jesus has been crucified even for them. They cannot make God's work of no avail. So everybody is determined to mercy under the one design of God. Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., as objects of mercy, are prophets of Christ. Pharaoh, Esau and Israel point to the judgment which Christ took upon himself. They all stand in service of the one design of God in Christ. God is free to form vessels of honor (the church) and vessels of dishonor (witnesses of judgment).

There is no symmetry, however, between both actions. The first

speaks God's "yes," God's final goal; the second his "no," which has no goal in itself, but is spoken to testify to the "yes," in which Christ takes the judgment of all upon himself. The first speaks about what comes and stays. The second about what passes away. For the latter God uses Israel, the obstinate and hardened. They are used in the service of God to let the undeserving character of his mercy to the elect be seen. The obstinate whom he uses to do this service can only come to good. There lies over their apostasy the reflection of the divine act of love in which even his own Son was not spared but was delivered up for us all. The Jews have served to deliver over Christ and to make Paul an apostle of the gentiles.

The casting away, the hardening and making obstinate, thus stand here entirely under election, and do service in the one design of God to have compassion in Christ. The seven thousand under Elias and the others, the hardened, form one people, the congregation of God. Christ uses both in his service. His election spans in one people elected reprobate and elected elect. Unbelief and obstinacy, and the schism of the synagogue, is not an eternal fact but one limited in time. How could unbelief ever create or be an eternal fact, since it is constantly denied of God? On the basis of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, it cannot be believed. In a broad explanation of Romans 9-11 Barth reads this into the text.

We need not go into further detail. The main point here is that after the coming of Christ Scripture offers no basis for a distinction between two groups within the one people of God, one which preaches God's mercy and the other God's judgment. The people of God are now no longer a national church but a congregation within the church. Christ's people are now the true Israel (Gal. 6: 16, I Cor. 10: 18, Rom. 9: 6) and the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3: 29, Rom. 9: 7). The church is now the assembly of the true believers in Christ and chosen in Christ to everlasting life. All who do not truly believe are at best in the church but never of the church. This church has the keys of the kingdom of heaven and witnesses to God's mercy and judgment. But the aspect of judgment is only the dark side of her real message.

7. Barth speaks the most extensively concerning the election of individuals. The traditional doctrine of predestination began with this problem and never really rose above it. It remained with the eternal ordering of the private relationship between God and the individual man. The general attitude of the West is reflected here. The human individual is estimated to be of the highest value. This point of view developed in late classical thinking, burst forth in full bloom in the Renaissance, and governed the whole modern period. It is not coinci-

dental that Augustine, the father of the traditional doctrine of predestination, has also given us in his *Confessions* the genre of autobiography. His doctrine of predestination answered the question as to why some do believe and others do not. He could, however, still see two conditions as the object of predestination and he gave a few indications of a Christological understanding of predestination. Calvin made a good beginning by relating predestination first to the church but he ended, nevertheless, with the decree of God concerning the lot of every man. And this remained the self-evident direction of thought. Men generally spoke of election, as if there were no Israel and no church.

So not only was the way paved for Pietism and Rationalism but also for the worldly individualism of Rousseau, Schleiermacher, Stirner, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Men began to lay the beginning and the end of God's ways in the individual personality of man.

The problem of divine election does not concern itself primarily with the election of individuals, but certainly does include it. The theme of the individual also belongs to predestination but then not abstractly but in connection with the election of Jesus Christ and of his people. The election of Jesus Christ is certainly related to the election of individuals. It is their election about which the election of Christ is concerned. The election of the people of God makes the election of individuals to be understood in a relative sense but at the same time provides the foundation for individual election. The people of God must proclaim their election to men. Individualism comes to its own in the election of Jesus Christ and of the people of God because both find their goal in the election of individuals.

Barth considers two qualifications necessary. The concept of a leader is a secular mimicry of the election of the man, Jesus Christ. The Führer is the chosen one, not for others but in their place. The murderous cruelty of the Führer is the consequence of Western individualism. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, is God's Chosen One, not in place of, but in behalf of others. Communism and Fascism is a secular mimicry of the election of the people of God. The chosen man is here the social mass or the national people. Both concepts coincide in a totalitarian state. Let the individual die so that the whole may live. This is a reaction to the weariness of individualism. The chosen people do not kill the individual. The latter does not stand in and under the whole but is itself the whole. Only in this way is there no friction between community and individual.

The concept "individual," however, has more than one sense and must for this reason be defined more closely. Only in the right rela-

tionship to God can the individual truly and lawfully exist. But man wants to view his being individual as his natural possession without and against God. The individual who so acts and lives, exists and behaves as the reprobate. He chooses a possibility excluded by God's gracious election. He chooses what he cannot choose. He chooses godlessly. His worthless choice of the worthless has already been defeated beforehand by what, in the election of Jesus Christ, has been decided about him and done for him.

The witness of the people of God is directed to this godless man. This witness diagnoses his godlessness and testifies to the worthlessness, the nullity, of his choice. To behave and to act as an autonomous creature, as a man cast away from God, is an insult to God, which brings destruction. To be this kind of man, however, is not allowed. God has reserved wrath for Jesus Christ. Man's crime is therefore nothing but an impotent act. The man who purposely acts as a reprobate is a *destined* man. This concept of the individual, in this negative sense, is the crisis and limit of each individualism. The individual has recklessly lost the value and purpose of being an individual and has become a mass of destruction.

The message of the church to every man is *the promise that he also is elected*. The church knows of the mistaken choice and what this could cost the ungodly. The church also consists of the ungodly. But the church also knows of Jesus Christ, that he has taken the damnation upon himself. The ungodly stretch out their hands for eternal perdition but this end is unattainable for them because God has taken it away beforehand. The ungodly choose as they will, but, they will certainly not reach the place and the lot of the damned. God has not only negatively taken away damnation but, he also has chosen man, positively, in an alliance with himself. This is the message which the people of God have to bring to every man without distinction.

The ungodly who hear and believe the promise of their election live as God's elect. Between being and living, as such, there lies hearing and believing. Not every one who is elect lives as one elect. Perhaps he does not yet live as one elect; perhaps, at one time but not any longer, or only partially, or perhaps never. Such are the possibilities of the ungodly men, as such. The people of God can only witness to every man of the threatening damnation and of the promise which is also provided them. No more and no less! The actual election of the ungodly lies in God's hand alone. The promise always tells man that he is elected. But whether, if the ungodly refuses to hear and to believe, the church's task is to proclaim that he is living a reprobate life and is under the threat of actual damnation, or

whether, if he believes, the church is to proclaim that he lives as an elected one, is not a question of the promise. The decision rests in the subject. To him the words go out: Thou art a castaway and yet thou dost stand under an entirely different appointment. For thee Christ took the damnation upon himself and obtained for thee eternal life. Whether or not the curse or eternal blessings of God shall be placed upon you, is a matter decided by your personal decision.

We shall return to the distinction between "being" and "living as." We would give thankful approval, however, to Barth's profound observation concerning the concept of the "individual." We would do well to take this exposition seriously to heart.

We regard as unscriptural, however, the Barthian notion concerning Christ's taking upon himself the damnation and curse of all men. I know well that Barth — all proponents of a universal atonement have done so — appeals to texts as Romans 5 : 18, 2 Corinthians 5 : 15, I Timothy 2 : 6 and I John 2 : 2. But this appeal does not hold. Take the first and the last texts. In Romans 5 : 18 the apostle says: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Men may not divorce this text, which forms part of an argument, from the context. From the eleventh verse on, Christ and Adam are compared to each other and also the work which came about through both of them, namely, death and the gift of grace. In verses 15-19 groups are indicated under these covenant-heads. In the fifteenth and nineteenth verses they are designated as the many. For this reason, the "all men" in verse 18 can only mean "all men who belong to this covenant-group and not "all men in general."

The last text may be translated: "He is a propitiation for our sins and not only for ours but also for *those* of the whole world." But the word here italicized, "*those*," does not appear in the original. There appears rather: "for the world in its entirety." In this way a word is used for "entirety" (whole) which points to the structure, the organic entirety of the world. Thus, the smitten universe re-discovers its old order through Christ's propitiation.

The Savior himself clearly explains that as the good shepherd he lays down his life for his sheep (John 10: 11) and gives his soul a ransom for many (Matth. 20 : 28).

Closely connected with this view of Christ's work is the fact that, Barth can not do justice to the Biblical concept of promise. With him promise and decree coincide but at the cost of their Biblical content. The decree of predestination always consists for Barth not in the

predestination and election of particular persons but in the decree that God in Christ has taken upon himself damnation, and in him has chosen the people of men. The promise therefore sounds as follows: "Ye all, even ye, art chosen in Christ. He bore your damnation. Believe this and live as one elected! But I know nothing of such a description of the promise of the holy gospel in the Bible. The election of God is in no way related to the promise as it goes out to all men in a conditional, universal sense. It always sounds then as follows: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. This whole idea of Barth, however, meets its deathblow as soon as the Biblical concept of promise receives its full validity (Romans 4: 16; 9 : 8; Galatians 3 : 16, 18-22; 4:23). The action of God is then disclosed as carried on independently of human dealings and earthly conditions. The promise, says Greijdanus in his commentary on Romans, is a free disposal, a sovereign giving that carries itself on, independent of the doings of them to whom the promises are given and without their cooperation. And in this lies the real problem with which Augustine and Calvin wrestled.

Of course Barth is right that the gospel promise, which the church carries out, is always conditional and universal. This is also acknowledged by people of Reformed persuasion. But the Bible also knows of a promise in which is proclaimed what God does that makes the dead alive and makes certain persons to be children of promise. Here men cannot say, as Barth says, that in the Biblical concept of promise nothing is mentioned respecting the effect. Here the promise still includes the free, effective working of God independent of our work. Election, the covenant of grace (Jer. 31 : 31), the promise of the covenant, form an integrated whole which is lost to the Barthian view. Here is particular special grace; here lies the real problem.

Since Barth believes that Christ has taken the damnation of the nations of men upon himself, and thus all are chosen in him, the quality of the promise is attenuated by the quantity (all men). Thus, Barth is forced to say of this promise that there is in it nothing certain with respect to the doing of God or the work of the Holy Spirit. The whole outlook is changed, however, as soon as men discover that beside the conditional universal gospel promise of preaching, there is in the Bible the efficacious particular promise of God, which in free pleasure leads from death to life, from absolute perdition to perfect salvation, independently of our acts or will. One can admire the warmth with which Barth summons each elected person to make known to the whole world salvation in Christ and to pray that this spirit inspire the whole church. But the real problem is first

discovered when the relation is seen between the decree of God, and the promise, in this second sense.

8. Barth now discusses the predestination of the elect. They are chosen in and with, through and for Jesus Christ. The aim and the content of their life is so to be and so to exist that in everything it appears that Jesus Christ is for them. Salvation is included but is not the sole factor in their life. The elect are called to universal service. Every elect individual is an ambassador, an apostle of God. He ought to let the light shine which is kindled in him. He has to speak to others, to recruit and to inform them of what for them is still hidden.

In this way the distinction between the electing God and the chosen man remains clear. Man can only witness, represent, display what God in Jesus Christ alone really is and does. He cannot tread in God's place and do the work of the Holy Spirit. He can only preach the election of men in Jesus Christ. He can only point to the excluded possibility of reprobation. That is his official service and in it God carries on his work. In the election of the individual, an invasion into the realm of darkness is completed. And the fact and extent of the invasion is God's business. That it finally will and must include humanity in its entirety (what is championed in the doctrine of the *final restoration* of everything) cannot be said because of the freedom of divine grace. God is not bound to any standard of right or compulsion. God does not have to choose anyone. Nor does he have to choose everyone. Barth would avoid both positions because as abstractions they do not convey the message of Christ, and are simply formal consequences, without material content.

Each election and calling is a triumph which gives courage for new triumphs over the kingdom of darkness. The individual is called to preach this gospel. What the results are does not reside in his power. But his concern is to issue the call. His concern is that the group of the elect not remain stationary. That God reconciled the world to himself (2 Cor. 5 : 19) is God's business; man's concern is to administer the reconciliation.

One may not limit the number of the elect as in the classic doctrine of predestination. The will of God is not to be divided; it is open in Christ. There is no other damnation than in Jesus Christ, in whom the heart of God is disclosed to us. The way to God is through the cross and the resurrection; there is no other way, we need not ask for another. According to John 6 : 37 Jesus does not cast out those who come to him. But does Scripture speak of many and not of all? Yes, but it does not imply any limitation or inability of the will of God, which is real and open in Jesus Christ.

Scripture clearly speaks (I Tim. 2 : 4) of the intention and will of God to save all. Christ is the light of the world (John 8: 12), the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world (John 1 : 29), the Savior of the world (4 : 42), the bread from heaven which giveth life unto the world (6 : 33, 51), the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2 : 2).

And yet Scripture does not include all men in the elect in *Jesus Christ*, because we who are in Jesus Christ have to do with the personal, living and therefore free will of God. We may not reckon with a freedom of God which is not his revealed love in Jesus Christ. And we must not speak of the love of God which is not the true freedom revealed in Jesus Christ i.e., "all who come to him are given by the Father to the Son and drawn by the Father to the Son." *It is God's business to determine the limits of the world, and humanity, for which the man Jesus Christ is elected and who are chosen in and with him.* It is enough for us to know that it is God's merciful omnipotence that decides ever anew. And the number can not be regarded as closed, because Jesus Christ lives and reigns eternally.

Nevertheless, we cannot equate the number of the elect with the entirety of mankind. John 3 : 16 refers only to those who believe on him. And that is not all, but always a part of the whole. Those that believe are the many for whom he gives his blood as a ransom (Matt. 20: 28), who, according to Matthew 22: 14, are still but few in relation to the totality of those remaining. few, also among those who could believe, to whom he is sent and to whom his voice has gone forth, and yet who do not believe. The New Testament nowhere says that the world is elect; it says that Jesus Christ is elected *for* the world, and it is this that must be emphasized.

The Biblical view differs from the church's doctrine of predestination, in that one of the elect is not distinguished by the fact that he goes to heaven (which in itself is certainly true) but by the fact that he exists for others to whom he may disclose God's mercy to the world. A child of God exists only for others. Election, predestination, fore-ordination, sanctification, being loved of God, being a member of the church, are synonomous in the New Testament. Except in Romans 16 : 13, and in the case of Paul, the concept of election is never related to individuals but always to the community of believers. Election comes to the individual only through the body of believers (Ephesians 1: 3, Romans 8: 28, I Thessalonians 1 : 4, Colossians 3 : 12, Revelation 17 : 14 and especially I Peter 1 and 2). What is addressed and charged to the elect is never isolated. The meaning and goal of the life of the elect is not that they are redeemed from

sin and are heirs of eternal life but that they are chosen to be a witness of Christ's election in the world.

What the New Testament says of the apostolate sets the tone of the calling of the congregation and of the individual elect. The church is essentially based upon missions. Her marching orders are in Matthew 28: 19. In the existence and acts of the apostles, the church must recognize herself as the assembly of the elect of all ages. Every member of the church can see in the apostles the meaning and purpose of his own election. The apostles must preach Jesus Christ with in the world. To this end God elects a man that he be a witness of Jesus Christ, a proclaimer of God's glory. Such is the continual apostolate of the chosen congregation.

We are tempted not to make any comments. Barth remarks concerning the task of the elect are Scriptural, and every church and every Christian will receive a blessing if Barth's voice is heard. But obedience to Scripture requires our criticism. For to his description of the duty of the elect, Barth adds a few observations which arouse our protest.

Barth distinguishes between the universal intention of Christ's offer, in which he took the damnation of the nations of men upon himself, and the effective application of redemption, over which God's free grace decides. The issue does not concern the infinite worth of Christ's offer, sufficient for the satisfaction of the sins of the whole world. (Canons of Dordt II, 3, 4) We do not deny that Christ has borne the wrath of God against the sin (note the singular) of the whole human race. But the question is whether the intention of God and application by God may be separated. The Holy Scripture plainly says that they coincide. It knows that the particularity of the sacrifice is not made for all but for many (Isaiah 53: 11, 12); Matthew 20: 28: (the ransom for many); Matthew 26: 28 (the blood, which is shed for many etc.). It is further plainly indicated who these many are: his people (Matthew 1 : 21), his sheep (John 10), those given by the Father (John 17 : 9, 11, 13, 24). Wholly in agreement with this the Scripture teaches us the particularity of Christ's intercession. In the high-priestly prayer, the Savior says: I pray not for the world but for those whom thou hast given me (John 17 : 9). Therefore, acquisition and application are inseparably united with each other, as it conclusively appears in Romans 5 : 6-10 and 8 : 32. Whomever Christ has reconciled to God through his death is even much more preserved through his life. Much more, says Calvin, is an inference from the truth of the nearly incredible fact (that Christ died for us while we were still enemies) to the self-evident truth that we being re-

conciled are preserved by his life. Who even, as Romans 8: 32 declares, did not spare his own Son but delivered him **up** for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Paul thus considers it impossible that anyone will be lost for whom Christ died. Whoever meddles with this robs Christ of the honor of being an all-sufficient saviour. These plain expressions exclude once for all the speculation of Barth that Jesus Christ took upon himself the damnation and curse of the nations of men and that the distribution still remains a matter of free grace. The Scripture excludes this because in it intention and application coincide.

Closely related to the preceding is Barth's denial of the closed number of the elect. But Christ does not leave a particle of doubt there. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me (John 6 :37). No man can come unto me except the Father draw him (vs. 44). In John 10 : 26-29 Jesus speaks concerning his sheep whom the Father has given him. For them he suffers and prays and he keeps them unto eternal life (John 17 : 2, 6, 24). Furthermore election includes particular persons so that Acts 13 ; 48 says, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The bond of salvation in Romans 8 : 29, 30 refers to particular persons who were foreknown, called, justified, and glorified. Romans 9: 10-12 speaks about the election of Jacob. In Ephesians 1 : 4 the apostle plainly says, "According as bath chosen us in Christ. . ." "Us" cannot mean "people" as Barth wants. These elect are identical with those named as believers in Christ Jesus and characterized as blessed (vs. 3) ordained (vs. 6), redeemed (vs. 7), reconciled (vs. 8) and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (vs. 13).

Moreover, the Holy Scripture clearly says that the names of the elect are written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world (Luke 10 : 20, Philippians 4 : 3; Hebrews 12 : 23; Revelation 3: 5; 13: 8; 20: 12, 15; 21 : 27).

Barth acknowledges that Christ does not give ransom for all, but for many, yes, a few; that only those whom the Father has given him come to Christ. But according to Barth this is God's business. *In our thoughts* we may not make a closed number from an open number, because we can never find any ground for this in Christ. (And what of Christ's particular intercession?). But the acknowledgment of the closed number as taught in Scripture may never hold the church back from administering the power entrusted to her. She may never make a distinction between the elect and reprobate. Her duty is to invite all to the marriage feast and to warn all of destruction. And it is just the conviction that the elect are a closed plurality

which gives the church its certainty that God's elect will come and her labor will not be in vain.

9. Barth also speaks of the predestination of the reprobate. A person who is reprobate separates himself from God, setting himself in opposition to his election in Christ. God is for him but he is against God. On this self-appointed way the reprobate exists with the elect. What does God want with him? What is the meaning and order of his existence insofar that even his existence is an object of divine predestination?

The predestination of the reprobate is concerned with an entirely different purpose and will of God than that of the elect. The will of God, determining both the elect and reprobate, is in the latter instance an expression of the holy, almighty, merciful *not willing of* God. The reprobate is cast away and therefore is entirely different from the elect. He is the man not wanted by God. Because God is wise and patient even in his negation, the castaway exists with the elect. The reprobate can, however, only lead a substanceless, shadowy existence. The reprobate cannot be other than in a relation to the elect, to Jesus Christ, and the man elected in him.

This shadow-form is as such dangerous, destructive, and threatening enough, but it is within limits established by God.

The predestination of reprobate is therefore three-fold.

1. In the reality of his existence characterizing him, the reprobate is predestined to make the address of the gospel visible. He represents the world and every man insofar as he needs divine election. This representation is a lie, for the castaway does not exist outside of Jesus Christ, but such is his existence. He composes the listening church; the gospel goes out to such people. Without those who are damned the gospel could be overlooked or forgotten.

2. In keeping with his character the reprobate is predestined to make visible and to uphold what is ignored and conquered by the gospel. In contrast to the "glory to God in the highest" he must articulate "glory to God in the lowest." How could the gospel message be articulate and concrete without this background?

3. In the limitation of his existence, the castaway serves the peculiar purpose of making the gospel visible. As the shadow makes light visible and judgment discloses grace, and death makes life visible, the reprobate makes the goal of the gospel indirectly visible. He makes it clear that there is hope only through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the reprobate causes the elect to take heed, he shares in the predestination of the elect, and thereby finds his own end, which consists in changing from an unwilling to a willing

witness, from an indirect to a direct witness of the election of Jesus Christ and of his church.

In dealing with the place and election of Judas Iscariot, Barth distinguishes a closely connected *three fold paradosis*:

1. First of all there is a divine transmission in which God delivers Jesus or in which Jesus as the Son of God delivers himself (Romans 4 : 25); Jesus is delivered for the remission of our sins (Romans 8 : 32). God has not spared his own Son but delivered Him up for us all; Galatians 2 : 20: who loved me and gave himself for me. Christ alone drinks the cup of God's wrath, not Paul, not Judas, nor anyone else. One must certainly take serious the suffering and punishment of the reprobate. It is terrible to be a Pharaoh, a Saul, a Judas, an Alexander or an Hymeneous. It is terrible to be threatened with hell, to be condemned to hell, and thus to be on the way to hell. But we know of a triumph over hell: the deliverance of Jesus, and Jesus was delivered so that hell could never again triumph over anyone. Jesus Christ is the sole reprobate. Therefore, the situation and fate of the Jews and the pagans, who in Romans 1 lie under God's wrath, is circumscribed by the deliverance of Christ. Anyone who believes in Jesus cannot consider any person as lost and delivered up to the wrath of God. There is an eschatological possibility of a limit to the deliverance of wrath. But the possibility is eschatological. It is beyond possibilities open to us. As far as our experience is concerned the damnation of the reprobate is an established and certain fact. The Scripture speaks of innumerable people like Judas, who have died without true repentance. If there is still hope for them, it does not come from themselves, but only because there is a limit (an *eschaton*) the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God does not inflict upon them what he has inflicted on Jesus Christ, Jesus' affliction was for them. If we say with Paul: "If God is for us, who can be against us?", the veracity of this expression of faith is tested by whether we can say, in the same faith: If God is for them who shall be against them? We are obliged, with our eye upon ourselves, to retain the eschatological reality of Jesus Christ's substitutionary work. And in consideration of the latter's efficacy, we may not abandon the hope of the future salvation of the lost.

2. Next there is the apostolic tradition, the divine transmission through sinful men of the reality of the divine deliverance, as they have received it. It is this reason that the New Testament speaks so urgently of the purity and trustworthiness of the apostolic tradition. Its trustworthiness consists in that the apostolic tradition has no other content and object than the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The

apostles do the opposite of what Judas does. Paul said, "yes," where Judas lets his "no" be heard. Paul states this expressly in I Corinthians 11 : 2, 23 and 15 : 3 as a characterization of his apostolic task.

3. Finally the deliverance of Judas must be seen in relation to the two preceding themes. Judas apparently distorted his apostolic office and served the devil. And in view of his deed, such is actually the case. He has established that the human world to which God sent his Son is the kingdom of Satan. All that others did against Jesus is contained and represented in the act of Judas. The more profoundly we formulate the sin and guilt of Judas, the more his acts and intentions appear closer to what God has willed and done in his divine deliverance. Judas' sin is to be considered in the most horrible light. Here Adam proceeds to an open attack upon God. But did not God will from eternity to suffer this attack and did he not suffer it in the fulness of time in order to heal man of his presumption and to restore him to the image of his Son? Is Paul not right when he says with his eye upon Judas: Where sin reaches its fulness, grace is all the more abundant; where the law definitely judges men, the gospel is audible? It is because God was willing to undergo this attack that the Son of man had to be delivered up. For this reason the act of Judas is to be understood as an element of the divine volition and act. Judas and not Pilate is the executioner of the New Testament. Thus in a certain sense next to Jesus, Judas is the most significant figure of the New Testament. Among the apostles Judas alone decisively completes the will of God and determines the content of the gospel. Not merely indirectly but directly Judas was God's servant in a way that Peter and Paul never were. Judas is a servant of the atonement and not a later witness to it. Such is Judas' positive participation in the apostolate. The grim negotiation of Judas with the high priests over the reward for Jesus reflects the eternal council, in which God decided not to spare his own Son, but to deliver him into the hands of men. The treacherous kiss, in all its insincerity, is nevertheless a sign of the thankfulness of lost man for the existence of him who serves as their mediator and redeemer. Jesus words: "What thou doest, do quickly," are not only a judgment of Judas but also a command.

Veneration and contempt are therefore both inappropriate here. The human and the divine deliverance are not to be distinguished in Judas' act. No conclusions are therefore to be drawn regarding Judas' final disposal. The reprobate in the New Testament are disclosed in the proximity of Jesus Christ and are not isolated, Judas, one of the twelve, is a reprobate elected to the service of God. His function is

identical with Israel in the Old Testament. And what is true of Judas is true of all Old Testament reprobates. Such rejection is extremely serious but it has no meaning independent of divine election. Divine delivery is superior to human delivery. The elected people Israel do not decline without accomplishing the work of Christ. The church of the Jew and the pagan arises through Israel's fall. The Old Testament is justified in that it does not represent the reprobate without granting election to them. The proclamation of divine deliverance is also directed to Israel, with the message that Jesus has also died for the castaway Israel. The ultimate outcome is in God's hands; man is unable to give an answer. We can only say that the reprobate is in a situation open to the above proclamation. To the question what does God desire concerning the reprobate, we can only say: God wants them to hear the gospel, and the preaching of his election. He wants them *to believe* and thus become one of the elect.

Few passages can better acquaint us with Barth. Here we see his warm heart, which summons the elect to service, and all the reprobate to faith: his profound humility, dispelling all merited favor of a particular class of sinners; and, his strong speculative impulse, which connects the deliverance of God, with deliverance of the apostles and Judas. And above all we can learn from Barth that it is unlawful to coordinate election and reprobation. Reprobation is the dark side. Election is the source of all salvation. The gospel speaks of life and death and yet in itself it is good news for everyone. Scripture lets all the light fall upon election. God does not find pleasure in damnation but in election.

However, it is nowhere taught in Holy Scripture, as Barth constantly maintains, that Christ is castaway from God. Christ certainly takes upon himself inexpressible oppression, grief, terror, and hellish torment; he is forsaken by God, but he was not cast away from God. He is rather loved of God because of the fulfilling of his official duty. When, in his baptism in the Jordan, Christ accepted his official office, to fulfill all righteousness, the voice from heaven sounded: "This is my Beloved Son." And when Jesus is deeply moved because of impending suffering God again says: "I have glorified him and shall glorify him again (John 12 : 27, 28). And, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus can declare: "Therefore my Father loves me because I lay down my life." For this reason one may not say as does Barth that Christ is the sole castaway. Precisely in the bearing of God's wrath and curse Jesus is precious to and chosen by God the Father.

Moreover, to describe the reprobate as one who sets himself against his election in Christ is an unwarranted oversimplification of the

problem. In the course of centuries millions have been lost without ever having heard anything of such an election in Christ. For thousands of years God's revelation was restricted to Israel; all other peoples knew nothing of the only way of salvation. The horrible decree of Calvin is a hundred times more preferable than a Barthian description which overlooks the real difficulty. One can not classify the innumerable masses who have never heard of the Savior under the three-fold predestination which Barth constructs for the reprobate.

And in this section Barth again attempts to reduce the duality of election and reprobation, of creation and sin, of good and evil, to the one act of God, the one ruling act of God, irresistible through the ages, and to which everything is subject. The attempt is made to include in the concept "*paradosis*," the deliverance of the Son by the Father, the transmission of the gospel by Paul, and the betrayal of Judas. But the total failure of Barth's endeavor is painfully obvious, however, when the treacherous kiss of Judas is at the same time a kiss of thankfulness of the lost humanity. We do not deny that God advances his kingdom through Satan and his servants, in spite of their intentions. But to make the betrayal of Judas a necessary link in the plan of redemption, so that Judas becomes one of the most significant figures in the New Testament, is to go too far. No indication of Barth's position is to be found in the words of Jesus. K. G. Idema rightly observes that Barth seeks to unify what Scripture presents as an incomprehensible duality. It is not man's business to improve on Scripture by positing the eschatological possibility of salvation for those reprobates who have died unconverted. Christ, the Son, who alone knows, repeatedly speaks vehemently of the eternal judgment (Mark 3 : 29), of the eternal unquenchable fire (Matthew 3: 12; 18 : 8; 25 : 41), of the eternal pain (Matthew 21: 46), of the worm which dieth not (Mark 9 : 44), and the full emphasis of John's gospel may never be discarded: "Whosoever believe in the Son has everlasting life and whosoever believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3 : 36).

#### IV. BARTH'S DOCTRINE OF CREATION

We shall now treat Barth's doctrine of creation, a radically different subject than that of predestination. We are especially interested in how Barth develops the doctrine of creation. For he has concentrated all the revelation of God in the one name "Jesus Christ." Barth upheld the Christomonistic conception of revelation in his treatment of pre-

destination. In contrast to his former fellow-worker Emil Brunner, Barth has steadfastly denied all general revelation, natural theology, point of contact, and all creative and sustaining grace. No wonder Barth's treatment of creation is so pressing. Barth is aware of the difficulty. In the foreword to the volume of his *Church Dogmatics* that treats of creation, Barth indicates that he is less confident and certain in this area. And yet he has devoted nearly five hundred pages to a careful and devoted treatment of the subject. We shall endeavor to present a point by point synopsis and criticism.

1. The first thing to note is that Barth *maintains his Christomonistic point of view all along the line*. The creation of the world by God is understood by faith alone. There is, however, an exclusive-noetic (i.e., concerning knowledge) connection between Jesus Christ and the creation. It is formally correct to say that we know that God created the world because the Bible says so. The certainty that the Bible speaks the truth, that we can trust it, is to be found, however, in the fact that the Bible provides us with God's own witness of himself in Jesus Christ. It is the Biblical witness to Christ which makes its words the trustworthy words of God. All that scripture says of creation gives knowledge of the Creator only through Christ. In whom the Creator reconciled the creature to himself, and reestablished a new future for the creation. The Bible in its entirety, even when it speaks of the Creator, the creation, and the creative, prophetically foreshadows Jesus Christ. The Bible is a whole. One must guard against a Biblicism which, while accepting the crippled inspiration-theology of the seventeenth century, appeals to scripture without knowing the Spirit of scripture. Barth would view creation from the point of view of Christ; apart from Christ we know nothing of God. From the great fact that Christ is the Immanuel we know that *God is not alone*.

The person of Jesus Christ proves that outside of God, there is someone in whom and with whom he deals. Since the Messiah is, we know that the creature exist; for we cannot see him without seeing Israel and the church and all believers, and with them the whole world of humanity. And since we know in Christ, God and man are one, man is not alone but is absolutely dependent upon God. In Christ we recognize the subject of creation, and the accomplished fact of creation, because the incarnation, is a completed fact. In him alone the puzzling object of creation, the heavens and the earth, is visible, and man is in their midst.

Only through Christ do we recognize the truth of the dogma of creation. Through Christ we know, not as a postulate, or a hypothesis,

but as a certain confession, that in the beginning God created heaven and earth. Previously the noetic connection between Jesus Christ and the creation has been overlooked. God's goodness and grace was spoken of but separate from Christ. Such a procedure is inexplicable since Jesus Christ is the only key to the secret of God's creation. Only through Christ can creation become a living article of faith. Barth appeals to Galatians 6 : 14; II Corinthians 5: **14**; II Corinthians 4 : 5, **6**; Ephesians 4 : 24; and James 1 : 18. All these texts teach that the encounter with Jesus Christ in the New Testament, whether specially stated or not, is an encounter with the mystery of God the creator. Faith in Christ leads to an active faith in creation. Such a life in the presence of God in Christ is a recognition of his *power* over all things. The Christian recognizes Christ to be the origin of all power, the bearer of the power of the creator. Faith in Christ warrants the recognition of the creator. Faith in Christ reveals that God the creator is kindly disposed to us. Amidst the calamities of which the world is full, because of our faith in Christ, we can still believe that the creation is a blessing, an act of grace.

Barth's view is a mixture of truth and error. We cannot accept a noetic relation as constructed by Barth, and we can not honestly discover it in the Scripture passages that Barth quotes. Barth's view is a speculation designed to support his incarnational concept of revelation. The speculative nature of Barth's conception is disclosed by a careful examination of Barth's thesis that the heavens and earth are disclosed when man is seen to be in Christ. And yet Barth's view contains an important element of truth. Through Jesus Christ — but not in Jesus Christ — faith in God as the Creator becomes living and powerful, and God's power, justice and grace are acknowledged. All the Israelites knew that God made the heavens and the earth, but for the great mass of the chosen people, this fact remained a dead truth. Only through the living faith that Christ arouses in us, is the tremendous meaning of the fact of creation seen and experienced.

2. In addition to a noetical relation Barth posits an ontical relation between Jesus Christ and the creation. In view of the decree, in which the Triune God bore the damnation of the human race in Christ, and chose to have fellowship with humanity in him, the triune God was under compulsion to create. Therefore, Scripture constantly connects Christ and the creation. Thus Colossians 1 : 17 speaks of the Son of God who is before all things. He is from before the beginning (John 1 : 1; I John 1 : 1), the first begotten of all creatures, that is the One by whom everything is created (Colossians 1 : 15), the head of all might and principality (Colossians 2: 10), through whom are all

things and in whom all things exist (Colossians 1 : 17; I Corinthians 8 : 6). Of whom it is said that he upholds the universe by the Word of his power (Hebrews 1 : 3) and that by him the worlds are made (vs. 2). With such words the writers of the Bible had in mind not only the eternal Son but also the concrete Jesus Christ. The Biblical writers do not speak separately of the second person of the Trinity but of Jesus Christ. For in the light of the eternal council of God, Christ is to be viewed concretely in every connection. The one who according to Hebrews 1 upholds the universe by his power is identical with the One of whom it is immediately said that after redeeming us he sat down at the right hand of God. The same transitions are found in Colossians I and John I. All such passages speak of Jesus Christ as very God and very man. *The creating power and wisdom of God at the beginning was, therefore, the power and wisdom of Jesus Christ.* First of all because as the Son he participates in the divine essence. But especially insofar as he was already the mediator in God's eternal council, he was already the bearer of our human nature, already a humbled and exalted creature; loved of God, and therefore the divine motive for the creation. Once the Father had willed to give the Son this form and function and the Son willed to take it upon himself, then God had to be a Creator. According to Barth's interpretation of the New Testament passages, not only is God the Father the creator of all things, but Jesus Christ, God the Son, through his own power, activity, and ability is also the creator. Since this is one of the foundations of Barth's whole theological position, it is important to ask whether the New Testament actually teaches Barth's view. Consider John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews.

John 1 : 1-4 certainly does not speculate concerning the Word in the abstract. The apostle immediately considers Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word that was with God and is God in a concrete fashion. But it is the fact that this very nomenclature is no longer used in this gospel after the incarnation, that indicates his divine glory and majesty, as possessed before his incarnation. Therefore Jesus Christ was not merely in the beginning. The one who appeared among us, was the divine Word from eternity. He is nothing other than God. It is here said of him that everything came into existence through him. No single thing has come into existence apart from him. By showing us his divine majesty and his divine work of creation, the apostle wants us to see the greatness and divine glory of him who became flesh. One may not fall into an exclusive soteriological interpretation. Such would not do justice to the cosmological aspect (the relation of the Word to the world as its creator). Berkouwer rightly

points out that Barth's exegesis is here untenable because John here purposely points to the relationship between the incarnation and the whole of God's deeds. For the apostle it is of the utmost importance that salvation and glory are not to be separated from their relation between the Word and God. The tremendous meaning of the incarnation is visible in the eternal perspective that the Word was with the Father. The passage is not concerned with the council, the plan of God where the Word of God was, because God's plan included the atonement in Christ. It deals rather with a being with the Father, in the reality of the eternal trinitarian existence of God, through which the mystery of the incarnation is relieved of all relativity forever. The Barthian scheme, in which everything is seen from the point of view of the soteriological aspect, may not be forced upon this portion of Scripture.

Colossians 1 : 5 ff. provides some of the most important Scriptural data dealing with the connection between Christ and the cosmic significance of his work of salvation. When the 15th verse begins with: "Who is" it refers back to verses 13 and 14, where Christ as the Son, beloved of God, is praised as our redeemer. What follows is not abstract speculation concerning the Son and the work of creation apart and independent of redemption. If Barth only raged against such abstractions, as they appear in the reflections of the Greek Church Fathers concerning the Word, then he would deserve our full appreciation. One cannot guard enough against such speculation. With Barth, however, the soteriological work of Christ swallows the cosmological. Actually Barth can only say that the world was created by God with Christ in mind and for his sake. But much more is disclosed. The salvation brought by Christ is here placed in an overwhelming cosmic relation from which we may not separate it. Apparently false teachers had come to Colossae who limited the redemption of Christ by ascribing a harmful influence to various cosmic forces. Paul explains that such is impossible because Christ, the Redeemer is as the Creator, the Lord of the world. He, who is the image of God and as the first begotten stands above all creatures, is the one in whom all things are created, which are in heaven and which are on the earth; all things are created by him and for him, and he is before all things and all things have their existence in him. Three prepositions, "in," "by," and "to" are here employed. If Barth were correct, Paul would have been satisfied with "to him" in the final soteriological sense. But there is more here. The first "in him" expresses that the authorship of the creation is not accidental, i.e., more or less contingent, but that it rests precisely in his being. He is always the image, the Word of

the Father. Because he is the full manifestation of the Father, it is reasonable that he appear as Creator. Therefore, everything as created exists by and for him. Without him nothing exists and all things receive in him their meaning and goal. The perseverance of all things also is dependent upon him, for everything finds its system, its connection in him who is before all things.

From verse eighteen on Christ is represented in his glory as the reconciler in which capacity he also has preeminence in all things. This advance in the argument is again of greatest import. All is not viewed here, as Barth holds, from the perspective of the incarnation so that the apostle establishes everything under the soteriological aspect. The apostle's affirmation progresses from the beginning to the middle. The glory of the beloved son is first illuminated from his relation to the cosmos. As the image of God, as the first begotten of every creature, all things are created in and by him. The world is not strange to Christ. All dualism is excluded. The world is his possession. He is its Lord and therefore he is also its restorer. The ontical relation of Christ, as the pre-existent Son of God, to that which is created is not detached or alien to his appearance as the redeemer. Christ comes to his own because he is the Son. And in opposition to false teachers Paul points out that Christ's work of salvation is related to the cosmos so that Christ's work of redemption extends to the extreme limits of the cosmos. There are no thrones, principalities, or powers, not created by the Son, and all things are renewed and restored by him as redeemer. We acknowledge that the full import of "in, by and for him" is not understood. Depths are disclosed which cannot be fathomed by dogmatics. Our purpose is here simply to show that Barth's soteriological reduction of revelation does not do justice to the data.

The same conclusion is reached after an examination of Hebrew 1: 1-4. The passage speaks of the Son of God whom God has appointed in his exaltation to be heir of all things. Whereupon there immediately follows: By whom also he hath made the worlds. There is here also a close connection, between the creation and the re-creation. He who has made the earth and its history (not: "for whom" or "in view of," as Barth wants) and who is therefore most interested in it, is also the Mediator of redemption. In the following verses the Mediator is introduced as equal to the Father in all things and as the upholder of the universe. And, when he had purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. We do not find any trace of the interpretation of Barth concerning the history of salvation, as if the Word in the flesh, which was thus in God's council, created the world and upheld it. The passage does not deal

with the incarnate Word that was eternally in God's council and merely related to creation insofar as creation provided the sphere in which he could appear as the redeemer. Rather the passage deals with the Son, who in the triune existence of God, is a reflection of the Father's glory, and an imprint of his being, through whom the world in its temporal course was made, and who upholds all things by the word of his power. The Son, who as creator is closely related to the creation, is at the same time the mediator of the re-creation. Barth's notion that Christ is the creator *because* and *insofar* as he constitutes the ground, the final motive of the Father to proceed to creation, is in conflict with Hebrews 1.

The Barthian construction that God had to proceed to the creation because of his decree concerning Jesus Christ has been sufficiently treated. John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 in no way support the exclusive soteriological interpretation of Barth. The attempt to base his Christomonistic concept of creation upon Scripture must be dismissed as unsuccessful.

3. Barth then presents — everything in Scripture must be understood Christocentrically — an interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 which plainly maintains that the goal and purpose of the creation is the formation of a sphere for the covenant history which has its beginning, center, and end in Christ. So Genesis 1-2 : 4a shows that creation is a presupposition of the covenant of grace. And Genesis 2 : 4b -25 shows that the covenant is the inner ground of creation. And in spite of Barth's ingenious detailed exegesis of these chapters, the data of scripture is not explained, but a previously established scheme is imposed upon scripture. It is a puzzle to me that Barth's exegesis has been praised as one of the most profound interpretations of scripture. It is a purely speculative construction. For example in interpreting Genesis 1: 2, Barth notices that it is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. He rejects two interpretations. The chaos of Genesis 1 : 2 is not a reality opposed to and independent of God, a reality then conquered by God. Scripture has nothing to do with a dualism of any sort. The usual interpretation, however, which holds that from the unordered condition of the earth God made a chaos into cosmos, is equally rejected. For then God would be creator of chaos, which is impossible, since chaos is absolute darkness, abysmal and futureless. Barth sees something entirely different. The verse describes the possibility that God has passed by with contempt. The situation is analogous to a human creator who in creating selects a particular work and casts others aside. When God speaks in the third verse, he indicates his choice of worlds. The second verse,

however, depicts a world about which God does not speak his Word. In it everything is waste, empty, darkness, a threatening primitive slime, where even the Spirit can begin nothing. It is the denied and castaway, passed by, and forsaken world, in which God's Word is not heard. To this world necessarily belongs the spirit which is impotent, because wordless. This world is mentioned in passing because it is real in its absurd existence. It is the world of the non-existent, the essenceless, the thoroughly evil. It is not the world willed and created by God but it is the shadow which hovers over God's world. This world already existed but God's creating Word passed it by, so that only its shadow can still fall over God's world. And this shadow can only appear again and again, because God's Word and his real choice and work are denied and forgotten. The world of chaos can only obtain its absurd character of reality behind God's back. The creature can be so foolish that he falls back upon the chaos which in principle God put in the past. Man can love what God hates. The primitive slime and the darkness can become reality and make the world become what it is not through God's word. The creature is not anti-divine, but he is non-divine and his creation is a venture, for his freedom is not divine freedom. In misusing his freedom man can fall back on the world that God passed by. That is the risk that God took with the creation and has taken upon himself.

In itself the cosmos as such, without the freely spoken and repeated word of God's grace, is not protected against collapse into chaos, into the non-existent and radical corruption. But the cosmos is preserved by the freely spoken and freely repeated word of God. God proves and shall always prove that he has passed by the abominable world of Genesis 1 : 2. God takes upon himself the judgment described in the words: "without form and void" (cf. Jeremiah 4 : 23 and Isaiah 34 : 11). The reality which this verse indicates was experienced to the full for three hours on the cross. There God proves himself to be the Lord over the primitive abyss and darkness, over the waste and void. God again conquers it, as he did in Genesis 1 : 3 in the creation. Therefore Genesis 1 : 3 speaks of what has passed away and has been radically conquered in Christ's death and resurrection (II Corinthians 5 : 17).

Barth confirms his own ideas in this text, but at the expense of sound exegesis. Nothing is said in verse 2 of a chaos. Nothing is said of a possibility but rather of a fact. The movement of the Spirit does not in any way show a failure to appreciate, a casting away by the spirit. Barth presents rich ideas (for example, that the chaos can only exist behind God's back) but they have nothing to do with the

text. And this example of Barth's exegesis is no exception. We could give many examples. It is prejudiced exegesis which would force God's word into a particular scheme. The description of the creation must include Christ in order to be able to uphold a preconceived theory.

4. Barth is convinced that *only those who see the work of creation in this Christological framework can confess that the creation is good and righteous*. The creation, is salutary, because it has the covenant of grace as its goal. When God said that everything that he had created was good (Gen. 1 : 31), one may not separate this from the whole revelation of God. The created world is good as it is, because in its existence and structure, it is the right place and instrument. And man in the midst of this created world is the right object of God's work that has its beginning, middle, and end in Jesus Christ. Its goodness, righteousness, perfection and truth consists in its perfect accord with the work of God's own Son, decreed from eternity and accomplished in time. What is created serves the Son and is therefore not evil but perfectly good.

It is not a question of how we view and regard the created world. The main thing is that the created world is there for the covenant of grace, for Jesus Christ. Our task is not to judge the created world, to acquit it with optimism or to condemn it with pessimism. We also escape a neutral position. For Christ's sake the creation of God is pleasing and therefore agreeable to us, whatever our opinion might be.

This basic position is extensively worked out and elucidated by Barth. A summary reproduction of it again discloses the basic conception of Barthian theology. Barth observes that creation has a bright side apart from the justification of God as creator. Justification does not coincide with the fact that the sun shines, the flowers bloom, and that harmony and teleology are noted in the created world. God's justification does not deny this bright side but it is not dependent upon it. All light in the world is nothing else but a reflection of the light of lights. The latter light also enlightens where the light of creation is obscure because the same God reveals and hides himself. God's revelation also includes as his true world his silence, his no and his yes, his negation and his affirmation. It should not amaze us that the justification of God does not coincide with his affirmation. From this reflection of light we must therefore return to the origin of light, where light is all in all. Such is all the more required because as small, limited creatures we do not fully understand the reflection of the light of lights in the creation. Much in this world of creation is infinitely

more beautiful and better than we can imagine. Its quantity and quality cannot be fathomed.

The creation has also a negative aspect, a shadow side, and here it must also be said that for God self-justification is not bound to this negative side of creation as many have thought. The perfection of creation would then appear where its immanent goodness is belied and its nullity is discovered. But the righteousness of the creature is not seen since the heavens are darkened and harmony is swallowed by disharmony, and teleology by a-teleology. Creation is not first made real by displaying the falsehood, the misery, the perdition of existence. Creation is not identical with negation which is also a property of the created world.

The negative side also has its ground and justification. When the creator confronts man with himself, through his revelation, then becomes manifest the inner perdition of existence, the despair of the meaning of human life. Man then acquires a sober view of his limits, frailty, and end. How could he stand before God without knowing that he is lost? Since the reality of the created world is manifest to man with the creator, he realizes that in comparison to the goodness of God the world is not good. In the encounter with God man does not dare close his eyes to the riddles of the world. The entire creation then stands before God in a relationship of guilt.

But God's disclosure is not bound to the dark nor to the bright side of creation. It is not identical with the darkness of the created world. It sheds light even where it casts shadows. God's revelation also casts light on the divine no, the judgment, which accompanies its grace. It sheds light also upon the silence of God, without which the word of God cannot be God's word. As we stand in the shadow we must consider that the same God who shrouds us in shadows is free also to change the situation entirely. He not only possesses witnesses of his judgment. He can discharge them immediately. Yes, when we are enveloped in shadows, we should not forget that they are only God's witnesses and not God himself.

God's self-disclosure can employ such shadows but it is not exhausted in them. The joy of existence is accompanied by its misery.

The shadows do not make us so restless that we are prepared to rest in God. Man cannot build eternal houses. Man cannot come to a knowledge of God and to the indispensable knowledge that everything is right as it is. God's self-revelation alone does that.

All things, therefore, must be seen from the point of view of God's

revelation in Jesus Christ, in which lies God's self-justification and through which the two-fold aspect of the creation is confirmed.

The revelation of God, the creator, has bound the creation so closely to the covenant, to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Lord, that from the outset the being and the nature of the creature has a two-fold existence. Positively this means that the creature is worthy of being God's confederate. Through the incarnation Christ brings man in relation to God. Negatively, the creature is nothing, frail and threatened. Since everything was created for Christ's death and resurrection, the creature is not a nothing, but a something, but nevertheless the creature is at the border of nothing. The creature is threatened by nothing, and can of itself not withstand against it. The creature is destined for God, and yet is capable of being unfaithful to his origin, and end. The creature is capable of becoming the instrument of sin. He lives but in himself and is powerless against death. He may hope in his Creator but must despair of his own power. Such is God's will! And both aspects of existence are founded in God's will.

God's self-justification includes, however, a surplus value extending for and independent of both aspects, of which it can make use, but to which it is not bound. God's self-justification does not exhaust itself in these aspects. It says yes and no unconditionally, much more profoundly than the voice of existence does. God's own Word has become man. God makes himself into a creature with all the accompanying greatness and misery, hope and despair, infinite value and infinite risk. And thus existence becomes manifest in its perfection. Thus it is right and good in its totality. Barth asks: Does this two-fold aspect have an eternal destination? And he answers: that if it did it would not be justification. God himself has borne and conquered this polarity. We do not appeal to God's goodness to hold on in spite of all opposition and contradiction. We preach no submission to the unsearchable. But we must penetrate to the conquest in Christ. The opposition in the creature is not strange to God. He was aware of our jubilation and our misery before it became actuality. The covenant provides the meaning and the purpose of creation. Before the creation God *already* accepted us in his Son, who as a man would die and live for all mankind. In the Son, God has placed himself under the strict law of the double aspect of existence. It was first God's own problem. We need not solve it, since God himself had done this. He has showed us the solution in Christ, his Son. And it is therefore good with us, since Christ's merit is ascribed to us. Since God has borne what we are, we are therefore upheld.

Barth argues that there is no stable parallel between both aspects.

There is no absolute symmetry and yet no dualism. In Christ, the "yes" is different from the "no"; the resurrection different from death. The former comprises the end. Christ dies, but dies no longer. The "yes" conquered. Therefore, there is no eternal dualism of aspects. We can speak of the best of all possible worlds. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Yes sounds forth to the world. And the No is given to sin and death.

The great failure of such men as Leibnitz and Wolff, was that in their optimism they gave no place to Christ. Such was also the weakness of orthodoxy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It knew how to speak of Christ on occasion but forgot him in many places. Consider its doctrines of God, predestination, natural theology, the state, and creation. It employed Aristotelian and Cartesian concepts, and its double-entry bookkeeping caused all sorts of misery. Only those who see everything Christologically, including the doctrine of creation, come to a sure, compelling and decisive knowledge. Every neutral position with respect to Christ is here excluded. Christ directs our affairs. We are therefore extremely involved. The history of Jesus Christ, as the meaning and goal of creation, is no drama which takes place far away from us. It is our business. We are his confederates. We can no longer choose between an optimistic, pessimistic, or neutral view of the creation. We are compelled by the love to see everything in Christ. We are coerced to accept God's "yes" and his "no."

We cannot run away from it. We may not close our eyes to it. Thus Barth has accommodated the doctrine of creation to his system.

Is Barth's interpretation valid? We would again call attention to those expressions in which it is argued that the creation (not the fallen world) had at the outset a bright and shadowy side, a positive and a negative aspect. For Barth the "No" is a property of the created world. At the dawn of creation all things stood in a guilty relation to God. Recall also the assertion that man, as a creature, is something at the border of nothing, and in himself is no match for the threat of nothing. No wonder that Christ is also under this double aspect of existence. No wonder the idea of the eternal existence of this double aspect means denial of God's self-justification. Barth must also devise a subterfuge and place a restriction upon God's self-revelation, in the work of his hands in Genesis 1: 31, because such would be true only from the point of view of Christ.

Barth's notions are not Biblical and are therefore to be rejected. They are pure speculations which are not only idle and vain but which contain a dangerous heresy, since they undermine the full responsibility of sin and guilt, and above all belittle the impenetrable

wonder of John 3: 16. God does not previously take the risk of creation upon himself, but creates a world which is holy, good, and completely equiped. There is no weak point in Adam's armor. And yet — no one can explain this — with full responsibility, Adam chooses against God, and for such mutinous criminals, who propitiate treason in the most intimate affairs, God's love gives his only begotten Son as a sacrifice.

Here again manifests itself the same titanic attempt of this powerful mind to grasp the unity of God's council and to see all things from the point of view of Christ. But even as many earlier supralapsarians, Barth pays the price of utter failure. No mortal can explain the perplexing breach of sin, the strange disruption in God's work.. Scripture does this nowhere. Scripture simply maintains that everything is from eternity taken up in God's council, and that man is at the same time wholly responsible for all of his acts. Even the richest minds do not get further than the language of adoration: Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! (Rom. 11 : 33). And in the midst of the horrors of our world, it is grace which enables us to keep in mind that the depths of God are wisdom, knowledge, and riches.

#### V. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our exposition and discussion is at an end. Much more could be said, a few main points have received brief treatment. In the main we have expressed our disagreement with Barth. With a variation of Barth's own words we can only say we are truly sorry that our attitude is one of dissent, but obedience to the revelation of Scripture compels us.

We are certainly not blind to the great merits of this Swiss theologian. His untiring battle against neo-protestantism, in all of its diverse forms, and against Roman Catholicism, is not without fruit.

His unabridged confession of the Holy Trinity, of the Deity of Jesus Christ, of the absolute corruption of man and of justification by faith alone has strengthened the hearts of thousands of believers over the whole world.

His powerful summons to a radical change from the subject to the object, from the placing of pious man in the middle point to the placing of God alone in the point of focus, and his shift from pious experiences to the authoritative Word of God, has been an unutterable blessing for all the churches. In many lands the revival of the study

of the Bible is to be attributed to him, and through his work exegetical and dogmatic questions are much more in the center of interest.

Many churches have again been taught by Barth to understand what it means to be a church of Jesus Christ, a church which may and must listen exclusively to the Word of her King and Lord.

His voice from Switzerland has encouraged in an unusual way thousands of Christians in the midst of the horrors of the world war, and his trumpet gave no uncertain blast. In these fearful years, with his fellow-countrymen, Barth stood watch day and night on the Rhine, on the Jura mountains, and elsewhere, and he took advantage of this unique opportunity to evangelize his company, which was nearly unchurched.

We gladly recognize all of this with thankfulness. But this does not take away the fact that this powerful thinker constantly subjects the revelation of God in the Holy Scripture to his own schemes. This was continuously apparent to us in the discussion of his view of Scripture, his doctrine of predestination and his doctrine of creation. Here lies the source of many deviations from God's Word.

In all of his thinking, Barth lacks that bondage to the revelation of Scripture which we encounter so exceptionally in a no less great theologian such as Calvin.

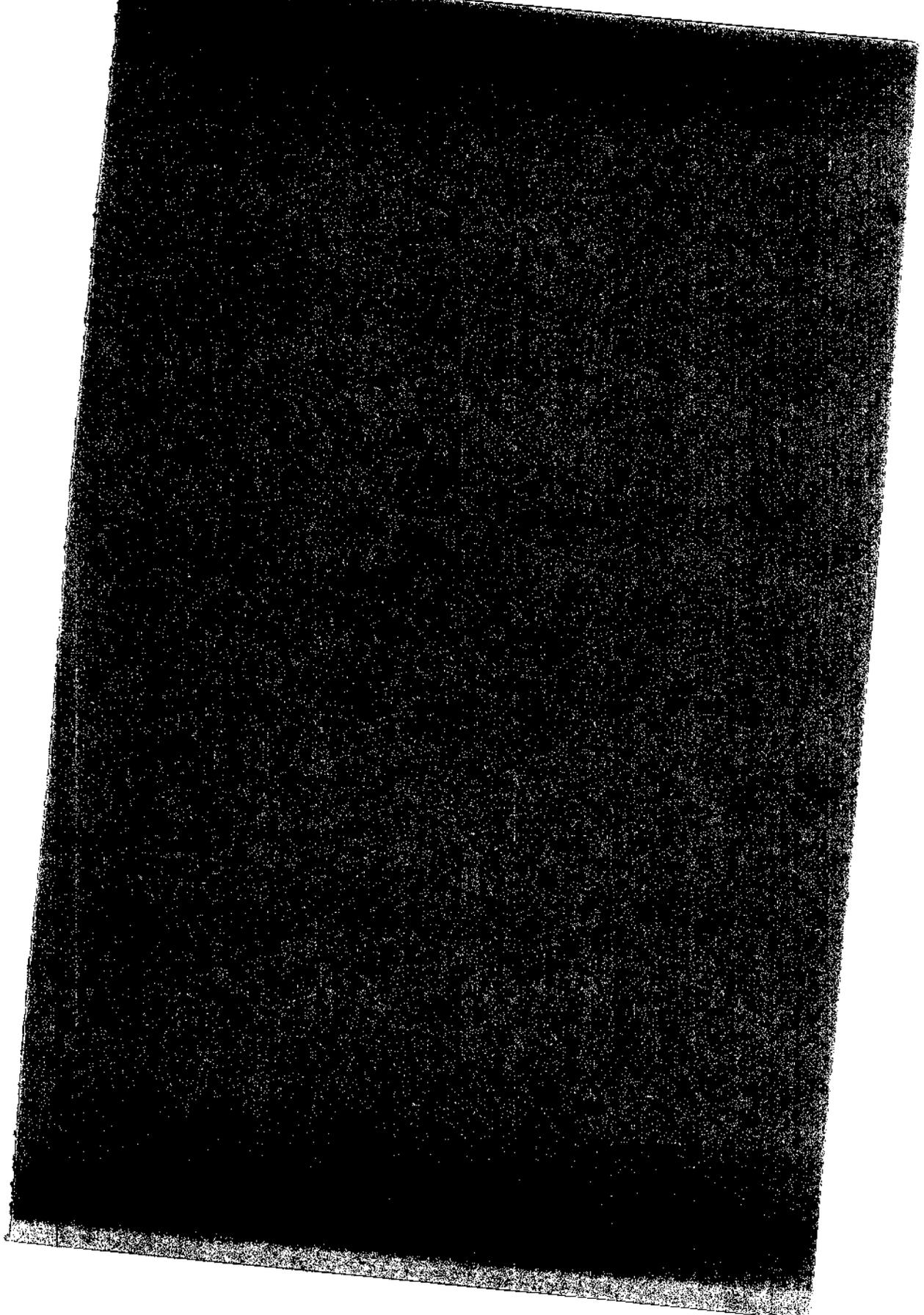
Such is fatal on the holy terrain of the mysteries of God. Everything which deviates from God's revelation in his divine word or takes away from it has no value at the coming of Christ's kingdom; and it must be rejected with unrelenting firmness by Christ's church. Only a theology which is obedient to the Bible can endure throughout the ages. The Biblical theology of Calvin, therefore, will be alive in the church of Christ long after the mighty system of Barth has become history.











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